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THE WASTED GENERATION

OWEN JOHNSON

THE WASTED GENERATION

By Owen Johnson

Lawrenceville Stories

THE PRODIGIOUS HICKEY
THE VARMINT
THE TENNESSEE SHAD

STOVER AT YALE
THE SPIRIT OF FRANCE
THE WOMAN GIVES
VIRTUOUS WIVES
THE WASTED GENERATION
MAKING MONEY
THE SIXTY-FIRST SECOND

THE WASTED GENERATION

BY

OWEN JOHNSON

BOSTON
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1921

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Published September, 1921

TO

HUGH WALPOLE

IN FRIENDSHIP AND IN ADMIRATION

THE WASTED GENERATION

PART I

THE WASTED GENERATION

PART I

I

August, 1916

I AM thirty this day, the twenty-ninth of August, 1916. The guns are roaring along the Somme front. Another great attack is on. The gray waves are passing over the top for the thousandth time and, for the thousandth time, hope is in the air once more. I feel it in the sudden optimism of the daily bulletin, in the groups in the market-place, in the little knot of *evacués,* here in a Savoyard courtyard, basking in the sun and studying the winding line of pins on the yellowed map of the front.

"*Brigadier David Littledale, Légion Etrangère, Croix de Guerre, wounded at Verdun, March 5th, shell wound in the shoulder and the leg, shell-shock and gangrene. Entered Val de Grace, March 21st, evacuated on Chambèry, July 10th,* 1916."

The record used to hang at the foot of my bed beside the fever chart and the record of operations. From Chambèry, here into a rest area, to put on flesh again, to quiet my jumping nerves and to fatten up for the return to the front. To-day I have no desire to hasten that return. I write it down frankly, — as I intend to keep honesty with myself and my impressions. There are other times when I feel the tug and fret to be back.

It is my mood to-day, as war is a succession of unrelated moods.

This morning I ask no more of life than to continue here at my open window in the buzzing month of August, looking down on a drowsy world in animal content. A pipe of tobacco and the noonday meal — *Pinard, pommes de terre frites,* and perhaps a *ragout* with a touch of onions — all these simple joys to my keen senses seem the limit of human desires.

There is a touch of ivy at my window; below, the courtyard is flagged and the red-tiled, shovel-hatted Savoyard roofs throw sharp blue shadows across the glowing yellow pavement. Bompard, an old territorial, is peeling potatoes in the door frame. Coustic and Valentin, of the Chasseurs Alpins, are quarreling goodhumoredly over a game of Manille, and old Canache, of the *Bat d'Af,* is baking in the chaise-longue, kepi over his nose, and a thin stream of smoke twining upward like Jack's beanstalk. A mottled setter is flat on his side; a kitten plays with its toes; over the pink roofs the Col du Chat strikes into the skies with its brass cross blazing in the sun, and I say to myself, incredulously, that on the Northern Front cannon are roaring, men pitting themselves against machines, as the long trains of wounded begin to move our way, — into one of which at some near day I shall step and return to the Legion.

A buxom, tow-headed girl comes clattering into the courtyard, draws a pail of water and moves sinuously out. An exchange of jests, and we watch her go. She is more than a woman. She is woman. She represents that incredible other life to us, the dream life that runs at night with the will-o'-the-wisps along the trenches; violins and dancing under southern harvests; wet beaches and a glowing Normandy hearth; lights on the boulevards; children's voices; an old couple waiting on a door-

step, — many things to many men! To me it brings back a stranger of four years and some months ago, — David Littledale, of Littledale, Connecticut; an old, rambling, red-sided house under the elms; a household of young people, frolicking; a girl's face, — a first love; Ben, Alan, and Rossie, and one tomboy, shock-haired sister, Molly, galloping up the avenue on Pinto, the cow pony.

Will I ever go back to it and, if I do, will all this pass away like the frantic shadow that blots out the valley when thunder clouds come stampeding down the Col du Chat? Will the old life come out again, as the countryside returns, brilliant and glistening, sunlight and shadow, balanced and friendly? Is war an incident, or an education that remains? To tell the truth, I have seldom thought on such things, — never in the line of duty.

In resigning my will I am conscious of having resigned my imagination. The future is so indecipherable that it is rather a relief to say to one's self:

"Nothing that I can do, say or think, except obey orders, can have the slightest effect on what is fated to happen."

After two years war ceases to be an experience: it becomes a journey to be traveled in the shafts of the inevitable. I have gone through it, inspired, thrilled, grumbling, skeptical, rebellious, joking mechanically, but always, at the last test, obedient to the hidden power in the machine that decides my every act.

Why have I fallen back on this introspective mood in these emerging days of convalescence? I think it is as a refuge from the *cafard,* — a feeling of after all being a stranger in a strange land. Perhaps it has a basis in

physical weakness, — perhaps simply inaction: inaction which is so demoralizing. To-day I have a longing to be back — to rub elbows with my own people — to be no longer *"l'Americain"* but an American among Americans.

For there is always this difference between me and Coustic and Valentin, sons of the mountain side; Canache, Apache and filcher of the gutters; Bompard, tiller of Normand soil: they are fighting for something bigger than themselves that at times raises them to heights of heroic eloquence, that obliterates the present and joins them to their forbears of the brave days of old: Grognards, Sans Culottes, Chevaliers and bearded Gauls. While I, I am fighting alone, for love of a man's adventure, in order to find myself. I am alone, for, much as I love their country, it is theirs, — not mine.

Yet, if I cannot entirely possess this deep spirit of nationalism, it has been the most satisfying experience of my haphazard, drifting life to live among those who did. You cannot understand the *poilu* with your ears alone.

Blagueur, critique, sceptique (bluffer, critic and skeptic) — I have lived two years with them, *poilu* myself by the grace of rags and dirt, by a thousand sworn oaths never to move a further inch. I have sung with them in the slimy trenches of the first winter. I have cursed their commanders and sat on their boards of strategy. I have doubted, rebelled, grumbled, and denied my leader and, — at the zero hour, surged up and gone over the top.

I went into the war, heaven knows, wearied of my kind and of myself, disillusioned with man, seeking men. I have found what I sought. I have found and I understand them, — men, the mass, the race, which *moves on,* slowly, irresistibly, without inner questionings,

doing what must be done. Above all, I have known the love of the Fatherland, the faith of the humble, handed down at simple hearths, — the will to remain, whatever the cost, French. Well, if I am fated to lie in No-man's-land, I am honestly thankful to have known life at its simplest, its keenest, and to have served some purpose.

Blagueur, critique, sceptique, but, at the call of duty, — ready. Often have I marveled at the soul of the *poilu*, the bit of sunlight that abides in it — the love of the beautiful — the answering thrill when a hero leads; that inexhaustible reserve, at the bottom of which miracles wait! Yesterday the answer came, and it illumined the dark places.

At lunch we were discussing the prospects of going back, that and the end of the war are, of course, the daily topics. Canache launched on his favorite tirade against the *embusqués;* Paris was full of them; the hospitals were full of them; twenty miles behind the front they were as thick as berries; before they sent back the older classes who had been shot to pieces once already, let them clean out the *embusqués!* As for him, Canache, he would refuse to go, — like that, flat! He'd demand justice; he'd tell a few names, and he ended by spitting contemptuously on the flagging, and exclaiming:

"Sale Gouvernement!"

Coustic, who wore the Military Medal and the Croix de Guerre, humored the old rogue, knowing well the heart of iron behind the froth. But, as a *poilu*, he would have been a traitor to his kind not to grumble. For the *poilu* has a fixed attitude: everything is wrong, from top to bottom: the government, the leaders; the commissariat, especially; the civilians, always. And, always, the *poilu*, despite injustice, favoritism, neglect and inefficiency, is there to save the day! Valentin wagged his head wisely

and swore that every word was gospel. Bompard alone remained mute, buried in his bread and cheese.

"Well, old grunter, what do you say to all this?" I said, addressing him.

"Me?" Bompard's face is the purple of the grape; he has a long sweeping moustache and his eyes disappear behind shaggy eyebrows.

"Yes, you. What'll you do if you have to go back?"

"Bah! What's the use of words," he said contemptuously; "if we have to go back, we'll go. If we've got to fight, we'll fight. That's all there is to it. We'll do our duty — the same as the others — perhaps, the same, perhaps, a little better. *Que diable! Nous avons du sang français dans nos artères, et le sang français ne ment pas!*"

The revolt died. Canache's eyes flashed. He was back at the front, spitting Boches and swearing horribly. Coustic and Valentin, ashamed to have been caught in a cheap insincerity, sat up under the reproof, the good red blood of France mounting to their cheeks. Bompard had found the phrase. At that moment, had the hated little town major stuck his head through the postern and cried, "Volunteers, to go immediately to the front!" we would have risen, as one man, and cried:

"Ready!"

So our leaders talk to us who understand us. A phrase — something to fire the imagination — something to exalt the heart — something to throw defiantly from the lips in the cauldron of battle — a phrase to the *poilu* is worth an army or ten thousand cannon!

It was with a phrase that we won at Verdun and rolled the Hun back from the Marne.

"Mourir sur place! Debout les morts! Ils ne passeront pas!" The whole war is there. And to me who

heard it, the phrase which fell unconsciously from old Bompard's lips, — "French blood never lies!" makes the rest comprehensible.

It is something to have the right to a phrase like that.

II

YESTERDAY, when I began these notes, it was more as a caprice than from any conviction that I would continue them. Yet to-day, I find myself to my surprise filled with a certain eagerness. During the night the thought came to me that it would be interesting to attempt an absolutely honest portrayal of myself, setting down everything, small and great, the good and the bad, as it occurred.

A classmate I met at Harvard (I cannot remember his name) once said to me, casually:

"The man who has the courage to write down day by day the true record of his life, concealing nothing, excusing nothing, without attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable, putting down the sublime and the ridiculous, the mud that soils his feet as he contemplates the stars, the struggle, the inconsistencies, the little basenesses, the hypocrisies that make him virtuous — the man who will dare arraign himself before the pitiless bar of his own judgment — will leave an immortal book. But no one has ever confessed, and no one ever will."

I never forgot this remark. It determined a whole course of mental speculation, fortunately or unfortunately, for it threw me into a period of introspection which at times verged perilously close to a melancholia, which might have been fatal had I not had in my sound body the corrective of an intense animal delight in life.

and an abounding curiosity for adventure. Since then, I have read copiously in the so-called confessions that line the shelves of intimate libraries, and I have recognized the essential truth of the dictum. Even Jacques Casanova who, in the effrontery of his brilliant record of a master-rogue, seems to have approached the stark verity of a confession, has moments of colossal vanity, in which he cannot resist the temptation to pose as an honest man. As for the famous confessions of Jean Jacques Rousseau, they confess nothing at all except perhaps the author's desire to pass as a great man.

It may be that a sentiment of vanity alone is the impulse which has determined me to this attempt; yet I do not think it is entirely that, — except as vanity is a natural and healthy quality and is allied to ambition. What is ambition? Is it not an instinctive rebellion against the little term of existence which is accorded to us, the soul's struggling against mortality, — the longing to leave something behind us so that we shall not be utterly snuffed out?

Of such ambition I am conscious. If two years voyaging over the stormy paths of war has left me with a new conception of the flotsam value of my life against the great currents of human destiny, it has robbed death of half its terrors. Death has seemed such a casual thing. Yet, at other times, there comes a swift, passionate revulsion towards living, — a need of not entirely passing out of the memory of those who have known us. This is the explanation, I believe, of the multitude of little diaries, often but a jumble of hasty notes jotted down on the eve of an attack; an impression of incredulous delight after deliverance out of the agony of battle; a last cry of the soul, scribbled in a shell hole under the flaming winds of

a bombardment; a final struggling to leave something that will remain, — something tangible beyond a memory that recedes. It is this instinct, I think, which I obey. We are all more or less fatalists; and I, for my part, feel that my end will come in the moving ranks — some day — sooner or later — but inevitably. There were those who were certain they would pass unscathed out towards the unimaginable dawn, who died at my side, by a grim freak of fate that left me living. Yet my fatalism is unshaken. I am neither sadder nor happier for it: I accept it as the final explanation of my presence here.

Before estimating my past conduct or proceeding to a critical analysis of the future, I may as well take stock of Mr. David Littledale, as he stands to-day.

Physically the damage done is trifling and soon repaired. The shoulder is as good as new. The leg will carry a limp for some time to come. The effects of the gas are rapidly departing, and in another two months my nerves should come again under complete control.

Outwardly I am a typical Littledale, of a family of fighting men and militant preachers. There never was a Littledale who did not have three marked characteristics; the straight bushy line of the eyebrows, the low cropped hair over the forehead, and the mouth cut like an inverted sickle. The stark ruggedness of the jaws of our Puritan ancestry has been softened with easier generations but the faces run lean and brown and muscled. The ears are particularly my own and have a defiant way of leaving the head that has earned a score of insulting nicknames.

As a family we are not given to gayety, rather overserious, I am afraid; tenacious, introspective, seldom shining in conversation, listeners rather than debaters, realists and traditionalists, — though occasionally a

dreamer, like my brother Alan, comes into the family, rebels, breaks away, and disappears restlessly into the outer world.

To take stock of myself mentally is not so easy. I have received the deplorable education of the day. Everything that possibly could be done was done to make me hate the pursuit of knowledge. I am, indeed, an excellent example of the signal failure of American education, — the failure to provide for the utilization of a developed type. My father and my grandfather and his father before him were brought up to public service as the result of a system of society and education which demanded service of them. What, all at once, has happened to our generation? We had everything to make us leaders, family traditions, unlimited opportunity and undoubted energy; yet the only result that I can see of our education has been either to divert our unquestioned energy towards a heaping up of material comforts or to make of us triflers and dilettanti; in a word, parasites. It may have been our fault, but I think it was deeper, — the fault of national thinking. Undoubtedly, in the future, the irresistible forces which mold a nation will bring order into the multiplicity of confused movements which now dominate us. But as I look back, even from my short retrospective, and see myself and my brothers, I can give but one judgment. We are a generation wasted.

I am at that point in my life when traditions fall away; when a man, educated as I have been, suddenly finds himself alone, wandering through a vast valley of doubt, seeking, with the instinct that is in men for order, to recreate in stone the house of cards which has just fallen about him.

What do I really believe? What of my education remains after the test of experience? I was taught certain principles of morality, certain judgments on conduct, given certain standards of right and wrong. Virtue must bring its own reward and the wages of sin is death.

After a few years' contact with the world, I find myself completely mystified. Perhaps I have been too often behind the scenes and must pay the penalty of disillusionment. I was given certain principles of common honesty, — and I have seen great criminals exalted because they either stole on a grandiose scale or procured others to steal for them. True, I have heard many unflattering judgments passed on these financiers, privately, but these criticisms seemed to proceed more from an instinctive envy, and I seldom found that they interfered in the least with the successful rogue's power in the community. I was given certain sharp distinctions between good women and bad. In the cosmopolitan society which I knew in Paris, I saw those who were surest of their position flagrantly and insolently defying all public criticism. I have never found, in my occasional contact with women of the demimonde, the libertinage that I have met with in certain of the most exalted spheres of society.

My grandfather was Senator and a member of the National Cabinet. My great-grandfather was one of the founders of the nation. My father, as judge of the Circuit Court, has been in intimate touch with public men and party politics. The ideal of public leadership I have always regarded reverently and yet, on closer contact, I have discovered that the leaders who were like demigods to my young imagination were capable of underhand trafficking for office and midnight deals with repellant political tricksters that seemed to me to place them on a level with political fences, — receivers of stolen political goods. Puritan I am and shall always be,

so long as the heart of a child, which abides in every man, remains open. Yet I have been wandering along pagan roads, seeking new readjustments, which do not satisfy me, as I at first believed.

There may be a deeper truth than I have uncovered below the shallow surface of my experience. There must be, though I have not yet had the vision to perceive it, — unless it be by renouncing the class into which I was born and seeking new elements of faith in closer contact with the great simple mass of humanity which remains vitally significant and predestined, through the saving grace of struggle.

Yet do I believe, whole-heartedly and without reservation, in Democracy? I am not sure. Certainly, not in the demoralization into which I see it now wandering. Not if it means Democracy at the price of inefficiency, rejection of self-discipline, and the negation of real leadership. The vital principle, to me, is the equalization of opportunity. Yet with it there must be an aristocracy of achievement and an ability to recognize the quality of leadership in exceptional men, — without which Democracy is no better than a rabble.

If I should announce such ideas in the rigid formalism of my Littledale home, I would be regarded, I know, as an intellectual pariah. But I am not seeking to impose my ideas on others. I am setting them down in a moment of intellectual luxury, for my own self-education; that is, as I perceive them through this vista of isolation, when old commonplaces come into a new significance.

To-day there is a great yearning inside me, allied with a new feeling of homesickness. I long to go to the home

that is denied me. The air which I have breathed these long two years has been extraordinarily vital. I have lived with humanity at its keenest. With all the sodden realism of war, with all its inconsistencies of detail, its mingled brutality and heroism, it has been a privilege to have known its rare moments of exaltation. I have known my kind as they are, as my friends in the court-yard below are, — inconsistent and frail, selfish, avaricious, sunk in mere animal passions of living; but I have seen a sudden flaming vision of sacrifice exalt them above the brute, as I have known Christian and Pagan to offer themselves on the cross of their own suffering that their race might go on living.

III

September

Sunday evening.

THIS morning I attended Mass with Coustic and Valentin, who are very religious. (The others are not.) I like the solemnity and the calm of the old Cathedral, the footsteps that slip past lost in the obscurity, the candle-points that punctuate the darkness without illuminating it, the sense of repose, beauty, meditation. Yet, every time I enter a church now and see the cross, my memory returns to another crucifixion, to a man who was not divine, yet who never flinched in his sacrificial agony.

His name was Jules Fromentin, and a worse rascal did not exist in the company. He had been a deserter in the Argentine, but he had his code. And, somewhere in the bottom of his muddied philosophy was the love of France.

He caught the first steamer, claimed foreign citizenship, and enlisted in the Legion. One night, in the spring of 1915, when we held the trenches at the foot of the Notre Dame de Lorette slopes, working towards Ablain St. Nazaire, a scouting detail was caught between the lines and wiped out. Fromentin, alone, wounded to the death, was left hanging on an advanced section of our barbed wire, to which he had struggled. To attempt a rescue was humanly impossible. We had made an advance the night before, and another was expected. The Boches, on the *qui vive,* kept the night luminous with rockets and drooping flares. No head could have appeared for an instant above the trench in the illuminated night. At that, only the authority of our commander held us in. I can remember still our feeling of horror and of rage as we crouched helplessly in the whipped-around trench and listened with the cold sweat starting up our backs. Fromentin was singing, — a ribald marching song, an unprintable thing, salacious and vilifying the Boches. From time to time a bullet reached home. Then the song ceased, and a defiant voice cried:

"Touché! Vive la France!"

He lay there, suffering untold tortures — a man, and not a god — without hope or faith, passing through the sacrificial agony, and yet, hour after hour:

"Touché! Sales Boches! Vive la France!"

Then, at dawn, a final bullet, more merciful than the rest.

"Touché! Ah —" And silence.

When we got to him, two days later, there were twenty-two bullet wounds in him.

I put it down reverently, and reverently I compare that crucifixion that is a symbol of mankind dying for an ideal with the divine agony on Calvary. The agony was

equal but no certainty of Paradise opened before the man, unless there came a glorified vision we could not share. Often, in the drab weariness of war, the sodden fatigue, the brutalizing of the instincts and the weakening of the spirit, I go back to the lingering horror and sublimity of that night and cling to my symbol. For me every crude wooden cross that rises in the fields has this human replica of the Calvary.

The strange thing, or perhaps the natural thing, is that I have little inclination to write about the war. It is rather myself in its past progression and the self which has come out of the reaction of the war which interests me.

For the war is not a logical sequence in my memory. It is a jumble and confusion of reiterated notes, endless movement, hunger, drenching, cold. Only a few scenes detach themselves, — a very few. When I recall the mobilization, I hear only one voice in the surge and roar of hysterical multitudes crowding down to the departing trains at the Gare du Nord, — a child's voice, saying:

"*Non, non,* mamma, — don't cry. Be brave, — till he's gone!"

I seldom remember definite details, any particular dawn breaking after the night of vigil, or the shrinking waiting of any one bombardment. It is all one stretching gray line of sky; a tireless to and fro of men and horses; the same broken line of trenches, a monotony of slime and sleety rain; and all this is confused, as though I were struggling upward through swirling, roaring bodies of water. Repetition has dulled the perceptions. I am conscious only of fatigue, of unending beating against the ears, of vigils under stars that never sink, of

marching, — yes, here one vivid impression always returns. It is one of those memories that enter into the phantasmagoria of the night.

I am back again in the ranks, that have been marching for days. Some one — the comrade at my left — says:

"Mon vieux?"

"What is it?"

"I want to sleep a little."

"Pass over your rifle."

Then he places his arm about my neck and the same to the comrade on the other side, and presently I hear him begin to snore; marching, and dead asleep, — until we wake him up and another takes his place.

What else comes out of the blur? The red smile of a comrade who lay grinning at me in a shell hole all one mortal day. I remember no one night, but I remember distinctly Night in the trenches, — the winging bullets, the occasional rocket, the rising, lumbering whirl of a trench mortar, the sudden digging in against the damp wall, a breathless wait, and then, somewhere up the line, an explosion, and a shriek:

"Ah, Jésu!"

But all this is the confusion of drifting fog. Out of the months in the Val de Grace I can see but two faces, — the provocative smile of a nurse, as a doctor whispered in her ear amid the groans and delirium of a Senegalese dying beside me, and another, the face of an old, ugly woman, strangely devoted and untiring, — an old woman on her hands and knees, scrubbing the floors for us, who, I was told, was a Princess of the House of Bourbon.

Only these details come back to me. The war is too near and too inevitable. I wish to escape it, if not en-

tirely, for a brief period. For inaction is what is demoralizing now, inaction and the contemplation of the approaching fact. The moment convalescence ends and I step again into the ranks and feel the touch of a comrade's shoulder, before that accomplished fact, all will seem obvious again, — but not now. All my instinct now is to put from me this thing that approaches so relentlessly.

Two periods of my life stand out; the calm of the early home days, and the disorder of two years in Paris; two utterly, inexplicably different David Littledales; on whom now I, a third personality, can look with some dispassionate estimate.

IV

October

A BUDGET of letters with a touch of home has sent me back to my diary this morning, which, as I feared, I have neglected these last weeks. At the time these letters had been written no word had reached them of my having been wounded at Verdun, and as I sat recalling the thousand details of our daily life, I imagined how the family would receive the news.

Nothing could be more characteristic of the Littledale family than its departure to worship on Sunday morning. We are organized on the theory of absolute liberty of conscience in matters religious as well as political. My mother and Ben departed in one direction for the Unitarian Church, Aunt Janie to the Congregational, and my father, Molly and myself for the little Presbyterian chapel in the village square. Rossie, the privileged char-

acter of the family, remained in that state of suspended judgment which permitted him to lengthen the Sunday morning rest. No asperities, no dissensions resulted from this opposition of views. In fact, each Littledale was a little proud of the family's individualism, regarding it as the inherited trait of a strong intellectual strain.

We were four brothers and a sister, and all as different as one day is from another. Because of my mother's public interests and her theories on individualism, we were brought up with small restraint, along lines of our own choosing. Alan, the third of the line, was the rebel of the family. As I look back, I can see where the mistakes were all on the part of Ben and myself. Wild, impatient of restraint, Alan certainly was, yet the rough discipline which the older brother inflicted was the worst method of dealing with him. The two never understood each other. Every idea and every instinct was opposed and each in his way was remarkably unyielding in type.

While Rossie was alive, he and Molly, through their good humor and affection, were able to hold the insurgent in check, but after Rossie's tragic drowning matters went from bad to worse. Alan quickly assumed the traditional rôle of the family black sheep.

In every respectable family of New England there is, I suppose, always that predestined place. It had been so in my father's generation and in the generation before him. We all, with the exception of Molly, who was too young to have an opinion, expected that Alan would sooner or later disgrace the family, and as we did not conceal from him the state of our convictions he did his best to justify them. After being expelled from two schools and dragged into college by the application of every family influence, there came the final storm. In his sophomore year he became involved in a disgraceful row which reached the columns of the metropolitan press. Alan was permitted

to resign, returned home, had a violent scene with Ben and my father, and departed, vowing never to set foot in the family home again. That we were all unjust to him admits of no doubt — I among the rest — but at that time I was completely under the influence of Ben, who was three years my senior.

I have left my brother Ben until the last: utterly different from me in temperament, impulse and character, he exercised over me the strongest domination. From boyhood we had been inseparable. Study came laboriously to him, to me naturally, so, despite the difference in age, we passed through school and college together. Mentally I was his superior but he exercised over me a moral supremacy by the direct and ruthless expression of his will. His strength lay in the fact that he was diverted by no complexities. He had little imagination, read little, and talked less. The two or three ideas which guided him were settled convictions. Nothing perplexed him. In all things he was a direct force.

I have noticed the same phenomenon in later life. Men of little imagination and small mental baggage often dominate men of superior imagination by the sheer tenacious simplicity of never being in doubt of what they want. As I see them now, Alan was revolt and Ben traditionalism in its most rigid New England form. He was born to maintain what was as it had been, a mid-Victorian in his tastes, a Bourbon in his ideas, — quite capable, in another era, of burning witches at the stake.

For better or for worse, our destinies have been tragically intertwined, — how tragically, I alone know. His code of morality would not have looked well in copy books but, such as it was, it did have the advantage of sincerity and a contempt for hypocrisy as he saw it in others.

To fight hard and fairly on any question; to do as he believed every man of breeding did in months of relaxation, but never to surrender the control of one's self or to be moved out of one's calm by any wind of passion; to take women as they came, lightly; but never to lie to them or descend to petty meanness, or to become involved in situations which compromised your dignity: this was a code which savored rather of the *condottieri* of the Middle Ages than of the Puritan traditions he represented. Yet he saw in it no inconsistencies and, as men go (and as I have known them), the code had certain qualities of *noblesse oblige*. I have since turned from this insolent egotism but for a long time it influenced my attitude towards life and brought me close to disaster. Yet, by establishing this moral tyranny, Ben saved me from what would have been the shipwreck of my life.

At the age of eighteen, in the summer of my Sophomore year, I fell madly, foolishly in love with the daughter of a farmer back of Littledale, Jenny Barnett, a handsome little country girl, red-cheeked, black-haired, and gray-eyed, the beauty of the county. Looking back now, I can understand many things, — particularly with the subsequent career of Jenny before me, but then I was an extremely innocent youngster, whose head turned at a look from the gray eyes in the warm odors of June, and it would never have entered my imagination to entertain the slightest suspicion of her. She, on her side, perceiving what a greenhorn she had to deal with, made up her shrewd little mind to set her cap for me. Before I knew it, I had lost so completely all perspective that I seriously considered a runaway match.

To-day it is all so incredible that I ask myself if I could have proceeded so far, if, in the last test, a saving grain of common sense would not have halted

me, and I like to reason that I was but playing with an idea, deceiving myself as much as the girl. Yet I do not know that this is a fair estimate, for I have seen so much of what men do under the narcotic impulse of passion, even against their own will and intelligence, that I am not certain I might not have played the fool, — without the interception of my brother.

In my simplicity I had gone to him with my confidence. I can still see the shock of amazement on his face. Then he remained silent a long moment, his eyes on my face.

"Absolutely sure you want to marry?"

"Oh, absolutely," I said, yet my heart sank as though I had pronounced my own sentence.

"And the girl, — Jenny? Absolutely sure she loves you?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, you're making a fool of yourself, but that's your affair. I'll see you through, that's promised."

His words brought me no joy. A cloud settled before my eyes. At the end of half an hour, as though his mind had been made up, he questioned me adroitly as to our relations, our place of meeting, our next rendezvous. All of which information I gave him, without mistrust. The second day he came to me and said:

"What are you doing this afternoon? Nothing? Wait for me in Talbot's wood, by the old spring. I've got a line on a honey tree. Meet me at four."

"At four. I'll be there," I answered, not without surprise.

I installed myself in the wood at the appointed time and shortly afterward, hearing familiar voices, I sprang up and perceived Jenny on the arm of my brother. My first thought was that he was bringing her to me in sign of allegiance. The next moment, to my astonishment, I

saw her fling her arms about his neck and kiss him passionately, very differently from the furtive embraces she had vouchsafed me.

The next moment I was before them, with murder in my heart. The girl sprang back with a cry. My hands reached Ben's throat and we went to the ground. In my rage I understood but one thing, — that what he had done he had done deliberately, after having put to sleep my suspicions by an attitude of false acquiescence. My next impulse was the most tragic and instinctive hatred which can blind the reason of a human being, — the wild jealousy of brother against brother. At the thought that the girl could so easily have preferred him after all that had been between us, all the love that I had for him turned to the blackest fury, and I believe that for a short moment if I could have killed him I would have done so. The minx stood by, no longer frightened, but delighted in her vanity at the sight of our struggling over her.

At first Ben had burst out laughing, defending himself from my frantic rage but, little by little, under the sting of my blows, he too lost his head. We rolled over and over, clawing at each other frantically, striking out blindly. I was no match for him then in strength, and at the end I found myself on my back, my arms pinned under his knees, looking up into his bruised face.

Suddenly he bent down and cried angrily:

"You little fool! Is that the sort of wife you want to bring home!"

"You made her do it!" I cried, and in my rage I almost succeeded in freeing myself. He exerted all his strength and brought me back to earth.

"Made her do it! A girl that's engaged to you? Do you want to be the laughingstock of the country?"

My brain cleared and a great thankfulness came over me. I began to laugh uproariously.

This was too much for Jenny. With a swish of her skirts, she went flying through the woods.

I continued to laugh, with a sudden detention of all my nerves, cut by sudden involuntary sobs, but the laugh was not honest and something bitter and contemptuous descended into my heart, there to remain.

"Let me up," I said, at the end.

"All right?"

"Quite."

We arose and surveyed the wreck we had made of each other.

"I had to do it, Davy."

"You did right."

We shook hands and went home, his arm over my shoulder, a rare demonstration of affection for him. Had I only been present to render him a like service when the rôles were reversed, years later!

There was no need of admonition and it was characteristic of him that he never once referred to the episode. All my anger turned on myself. I saw the fool I had played and I swore that I would never be caught again. From that time on vulgarity played no part in my life. Milestone Number 1.

Unquestionably the thing that saved me was the blow to my vanity. Even to this day I cannot recall the incident without resentment and, though it is quite illogical, I believe of all the episodes of my life this will always be the one I shall think on with keenest humiliation. Even between Ben and myself the memory has always remained a secret irritation. For despite all my efforts to fight down the feeling, I still retain a little resentment at the superiority he had shown, — a primitive instinct of the male, I suppose, particularly when a woman is involved.

V

A REVULSION was imperative, and the revulsion sent me back to my own kind. There is, I suppose, in every man's life the figure of some woman who represents what might have been; some turning point at which he looks back and perceives where the direct road abruptly diverged. My intimacy with Anne Brinsmade was not the usual boy and girl romance but was something quite genuine and loyal and, though in the end the inevitable complications brought their misunderstandings, I look back on this natural comradeship, which extended over two years, with real affection. For this, strangely enough, I had Jenny Barnett to thank. The anger in me against my credulity and weak sentimentality was so insistent that to recover some self-respect I felt the need of asserting my ascendancy over some worthier one of her sex, if but to prove to myself that I had the qualities of reticence, authority and self-control I admired in my brother. It was not premeditated or conscious, yet if it had been skillfully calculated, nothing could have served me better.

Stephen Brinsmade was a lawyer of large political and business activities, a man of considerable fortune, and Anne was surrounded with every luxury and attention which he could shower on her. They had a big place at Taunton, about fifteen miles from our home at Littledale, and the friendship of the families was traditional. In my case there was a deeper reason. At school I had roomed with young Stephen and when he had died as the result of an accident on the polo field, the memory of his friendship brought me close to the father and sister.

Anne, even as a young girl, was a problem. She was all impulse, and no one knew where impulse might lead her. I was approaching twenty and she was scarcely sixteen at this time, and my air of determined impersonality successfully piqued her curiosity, roused her resentment, and finally drew her to me in impulsive trust. Her brother had been my dearest chum. For his young sister I could have only the most exact loyalty. I became her confidant, assuming the rôle of mentor, and occasionally delivered moral precepts with a gravity that was so natural that it even eluded my sense of humor. Different beings, I suppose, appeal to different qualities in us, according to their needs, and there was something in the wayward, lovable, undirected charm of the young girl which aroused the chivalry in me. My attitude, so different from that of the men who surrounded her, naturally had two results. It brought a delightful companionship, utterly free from mawkishness, or the simulated coquetries and aped sentimentality which too often, in the freedom of our American intercourse, leave the regret in man and woman of having failed in reverence before the things that count. Unconsciously, however, as this intimacy continued, the feminine temptation was hard to resist. Once or twice she tried to provoke my jealousy. I do not think it was consciously done, but I recognized it and my studied indifference undoubtedly gave me an increasing value in her eyes.

The influence I exerted over her was, I know, the strongest in her life. I saw that she idealized me and though the incongruity of making a hero of me struck me, a certain strength came from the realization. I never fully believed in her and frequently told her so, — much to her annoyance. I saw her as a young girl, too easily influenced, with natural instinct towards the good, yet with dangerous cravings for excitement and pleasure. I

knew as a woman she would be the creature of circumstances and, foreseeing the flattery and adoration that would be hers on her entrance into the world, I doubted the stability of her best motives. On these subjects we talked frankly, and once, with suddenly clouded face, listening to me intently, she confessed in a burst of feeling that my fears were justified and, genuinely moved, placing her hand in mine, said:

"When I'm with you, Davy, I don't want to be just selfish and superficial. I do want other things in life; but I know myself so well that — I'm afraid."

It was in the summer after my graduation that I first became aware that my own feelings were undergoing a change. In the beginning I was master enough of myself to control them, even when in daily contact with her implicit trust and her too frankly shown desire for my company. My reason warned me that my strength was in her ignorance of my true state of mind but, at twenty-two, with a young girl on the brink of a radiant and lovely womanhood, the reason is but an intermittent refuge, and propinquity and the moment, decisive. One night in midsummer, after a long and intimate discussion, when least I expected it, at her hand freely and impulsively placed in mine, every inhibition in me stopped. I raised her fingers suddenly to my lips, drew a long breath and held them there until, troubled, she sought to withdraw them.

"Why — David!"

She was looking at me, wide-eyed and wondering.

I tried to repair my blunder, hastily and awkwardly.

"You're such a good sort, I was thinking — well, I'd hate to have anything but the best come to you, later — "

She was still looking at me as I stopped, floundering. I drew a long breath and said:

"It's chilly here. Let's go in."

She slipped her arm from mine and led the way back. She said no word for the rest of the evening, while I exerted myself to talk to her father, and left as soon as I could make the opportunity. But I knew that she was not deceived, then or later, by my new, almost hostile attitude of aloofness.

The damage was done. From that day we never really talked to each other. And here a curious thing happened. Until then there had been no mistaking her preference for me. It was so open that every one saw it, — her father, my brothers, everybody. In fact, it was rather looked upon as a matter of course that eventually we should marry. I knew this. There are things which do not deceive us and in the attitude of Mr. Brinsmade there was even more than consent, though on the part of the mother I felt an increasing antagonism.

Now, over night, all was changed. We avoided the moments of intimacy which had come so naturally. Her attitude became the extreme of capriciousness. I knew I had blundered and believed that the blunder was irreparable, but when I would deliberately refrain from seeing her, she was certain to call me up and insist upon my coming to dinner. Yet the moment I was in her presence she was so silent and so moody that I always returned with a feeling of hopelessness and disillusionment. Hurt and miserable, my pride drove me to assume an attitude of raillery, which crystallized in a studious assumption of tolerant amusement and an apparent refusal to see in her anything but a wayward child. She resented this and never let pass an occasion to rouse my jealousy. I was, in turn, mortified, proud, and angry.

My old doubts returned and, forgetting how much my own attitude could excite irritation; forgetting how young

she was in the knowledge of her own needs; forgetting all that we had built upon together, I saw her only as an inconscient child, disdaining the toy which she had finally acquired. As her mother was, so I felt she would inevitably become, and I ceased to believe that the memory of our talks and the natural, kindly impulses in her would ever be strong enough to counteract the craving for the baubles of vanities which to-morrow would be thrown into her lap.

What hurt me most was the seeming ungenerosity of her attitude, — that after the years of unswerving loyalty and protection I had given her she should now adopt towards me the methods of a coquette. It ended on a trifle. There was a scene of petty jealousy — I cannot recall it now without astonishment — a dance accorded and withdrawn, — nothing more. And yet for that, the course of two lives was irretrievably affected. Perhaps this was but the pretext. We were both high-spirited, both too young to understand life's values or the emotions which swayed us, and both too proud to yield the first. For a moment's pique, we parted in anger, — I have never seen her since. A month later I left for Paris, to take up the study of architecture. Milestone Number 2.

The memory quickly receded. I was, of course, too young myself to have been truly capable of love. Yet to-day, as I look back, but for that one instant's wavering, I can see how my whole life would have run. From time to time I followed her career, saw her photograph in the public fashion show blazoned forth in newspaper and periodical; read occasional news of her reported engagements, and then, lost in the maelstrom of a malevolent infatuation, I put her finally from my mind, as at that time I put from me all memories of a life where quiet, order and simple ideals dominated.

I cabled home my decision to enlist. A month later, among the frantic letters from the family, I found one from her.

Dear old Davy:

Molly has just told me and I can't help writing to you. We are no longer children, are we? And the old misunderstanding was of a boy and a girl. I have always bitterly regretted it. I don't know whose fault it was, — perhaps both. If I was to blame I am truly sorry. I have never forgotten the old days or how fine you were with me. In all my life there has been nothing more *honest*. I cannot bear to have you go without knowing it. If you will let me, it will mean a great deal to me if I could help just a little, — keep you in touch with things at home, and let you know how many, many of your friends are keeping you in their thoughts. May I, — please, Davy — for old times.

Just as I used to be,

ANNE.

I have the letter in my hand and to-day the memory hurts. The *cafard* is strong on me, and the futility of my drifting existence. There are other letters, chatty, carefully restrained letters, matching the tone of my answers, — but this one I keep, for sometimes, in moments of depression, in the passionate revulsion to living, I turn to what might have been.

At this point, Coustic came in with my orders. To-morrow I am to set out for Paris, there to report before an examining board. He stared at my long face and the open diary.

"What's wrong, youngster?"

"Thinking of home, *mon vieux.*"

"What are you writing there, — a romance?"

"It passes the time."

"Literature? Bad for the nerves. Don't do it. You can't change anything — can you?"

"Evidently not."

"Come with me. We'll dine at La Mère Argentine's, — a couple of red bottles and — to hell with the rest! *Moi, je suis philosophre.*"

Which, after all, was the best thing I could do. And so, out for a last dinner with Coustic and Valentin and then no more. Quick friends and open hearts, — but when you haven't the time, as Coustic says, to smell a man over, it must be open-handed and open-hearted at once. Besides, one man is as good as another, to smoke with, to dine with, and to damn the politicians.— I drank my two bottles and sang with the loudest, but it cured nothing. To-night I feel the dead weight of homesickness as never before. The prospect of Paris brings no pleasure.

VI

Paris

At the Quai d'Orsay, where I debarked three nights ago, the old days came back to me with a vividness of pain which I had not expected; the old careless days of another world which has been snuffed out. I walked out alone, being *en permission,* feeling my way along the black banks of the hidden Seine. The street where she had lived was close at hand and habit was so strong that despite my reason I felt the tug of old instinct. Where was now that light, reckless crowd, so indefatigable in the scampering pursuit of pleasure? Scattered to the four winds of heaven. Most of the women have drifted away, — some to London, some to America; one, a fortune's favorite, died in an air raid; another, a suicide after her

lover's death, one whom I had not thought capable of a real passion. The test of war has redeemed some of the men — there were the good with the bad — by some spark of a saving ancestry, perhaps simply from a gambler's love of a new hazard. Those who were born to fight have found a purpose; the rest, — well, it does not much matter what has become of the froth: all that matters is that a man or two, whom once we despised, has redeemed himself with an heroic death. All these memories are inseparably bound up with the experience which, I suppose, was bound to come into my life, — that I believed erased from my memory, but which to-day remains a haunting, ominous specter which sooner or later must be faced.

The memory that obtrudes is of a clouded page in my life — a chapter which I fatuously hoped had been closed and laid aside forever — something to be regretted, to stand as a warning in the future, and yet inclining me to a greater charity. This I know is the experience of many men. That in my case, by some malignant turn of the fates, it should remain in tragic permanence, is something against which I rebel.

I think that I can now look back dispassionately upon the David Littledale of 1913 and recognize the impulses which led me into an infatuation which, without the outbreak of the great war, would in all probability have left me a moral wreck.

Even as I write this severe judgment, I react against it. Perhaps I am too harsh upon myself. It may be that of my own will I would have found the strength to free myself of the humiliating bondage — perhaps — but I am not sure.

Yet I am quite certain that not for a moment was I in love with Madame de Tinquerville. Curiosity, vanity,

habit, idleness; the pride of a young man still a boy in the ways of the world; a fancied domination over a woman accomplished in artifice; an unsated appetite for pleasure; susceptibility to flattery; the old Littledale failing of intense exaggeration in all things; all these motives I clearly see. And then, — I was playing at love, which often is more dangerous than love itself.

I have frequently heard women of the demimonde referred to as dangerous women. There is nothing dangerous in such women except to a young and inexperienced man, with quick sympathies and a conscience. They carry their warning on their faces. The woman who is truly dangerous is the unsuspected woman who waits behind the mask of a Madonna. Since my arrival, twenty instances have reminded me of the woman I knew as Letty, Madame de Tinquerville.

I do not know that I can be entirely dispassionate as I look back over this incident in my life. *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*: to understand everything is to forgive everything. There may have been in her life, in her inheritance, or in her tradition —perhaps in her earlier contact with men — things which would make her comprehensible. I do not know them. There is a mystery of evil and good in us that defies analysis. It is so in my case; it must be so in hers. And yet, — she is the only human being in my experience who did evil from the sheer delight of doing it. She did it as a child plays with some defenceless animal. Yet there was nothing obvious about her, and in all the different societies through which she moved I doubt if more than five men ever suspected what lay behind her quiet, strictly conventional attitude toward life.

I met her first at the studio of a fashionable artist, Enrico Gonzalez, in the midst of a Goya fête, to which

the fashionable, slightly *déclassée* society of cosmopolitan Paris had come, eager for a new sensation.

I saw her directly I had passed under the swinging lanterns and entered the glowing studio. Amid the gay confusion of reds and yellows, greens and purples of gala Spain, she stood out, slight and dark in the black velvet serenity of her costume, — an infanta with a certain intuitive dignity of childish astonishment.

She saw my persisting look, studied me a moment, and asked a friend to present me. The next moment I was at her side, flattered, inviting her to dance.

She shook her head with a smile.

"What — not dance?"

"Never, in public."

She motioned me to a seat and, looking at me intently, said:

"Tell me, where have we met before?"

"I am certain that I have never seen you." I was on the point of adding, "For I could not have forgotten it," but instinctively feeling how banal the answer would seem to her satiated ears, I refrained.

She looked at me, unconvinced.

"You are quite certain?"

"Yes, quite."

"As children, perhaps?"

"No."

My manner seemed to amuse her. She studied my face a moment, and then said:

"You are from the South; from Virginia, perhaps?"

"Not even that. A Yankee from Connecticut."

"Strange! I shouldn't have thought it."

After a moment, as if her interest in me had ceased, she asked:

"You like to dance, of course?"

I bowed my assent.

"There is a little girl from the Opéra over there who dances beautifully. Ask her to dance." Then, as I rose, perplexed, not quite certain whether to be angry or not, — "and later, come back and talk to me."

The conversation had been in French and, though I was certain she was not of that nationality, I was unable to place her. I know that my first movement was one of mistrust, for my answers had been unnecessarily brusque. For no reason whatsoever I was conscious of an instinctive antagonism and yet I obeyed her suggestion and began a tango. From time to time I glanced in the direction of Madame de Tinquerville but, though I was certain she was observing me, each time I sought her glance I found her in languid conversation with the group of young men who surrounded her.

The dance ended. With a growing antagonism, I asked myself why I had so docilely followed her request. With a resentment that was like a child's, I avoided her and did not speak to her again that night. This was the instinctive revulsion of our first meeting.

Yet from the crowd I watched her. Very small, she seemed slighter for the prevailing note of black. The only note of color was the natural brilliance of her lips, — extraordinary lips, full and, the lower one, sensuously so, lips that had just been plunged into strawberries; eyebrows like the flight of ravens' wings; a nose that might have been Cleopatra's, thin-bridged and slightly irregular; eyes black as Africa, not nervously alert like the glance of the city woman, which is crowded with shifting details, but with the fixed contemplation of one accustomed to gaze steadily towards far horizons and clear spaces.

Her manner? At first contact utterly impersonal, interested only in herself, in her pretty poses, her trans-

parent fingers and her dainty feet. I remember thinking that one might live with such a woman a lifetime and never know her inmost thoughts, — if thoughts there were behind the mask. She had two characteristic smiles which I learned to know; one for the public, — the smile that she wore like a necklace. Occasionally, when something stirred a slumbering spark in her, a smile all excitement and vibration suffused her face like the flash of footlights: it was then that mischief was brewing. My first impression was of distrust: of a woman all instinct, tyrannous, jealous, adroit, feline, languid, brooding, voluptuous, hidden and, above all, without sense of pain, either for herself or for others.

I retained only a troubling memory of this pungent, irritating impression when, a few days later, I received a formal note inviting me to call. I was flattered. I went.

She was alone. She made no reference to my avoiding her, led me to talk with intelligence, turned any approach to intimacy, and was so natural and gracious that I asked myself in astonishment why I should have felt such a sudden antagonism. In a short time, without my being able to distinguish the gradual progression, I was enveloped in the insidious charm of her personality as completely as though she had bound me hand and foot. For six months I forgot everything else in the world and followed where she led, allowing her slender fingers to turn my destiny according to their malicious fancy.

How did she do it? As skilfully as one plays a trout. Indifference — with a sudden touch of simulated interest, immediately withdrawn as soon as offered — a little opening of the doors to intimacy and, once I had learned to expect it, an abrupt refusal; the power to read me and

to rouse my appetites and my vanities: in a word, the ability to create the illusion of being pursued and of waking in me the instinct of the pursuer.

I learned of her life only by hearsay, never from her own lips. Paris is full of just such women; the drift of strange currents, out of mysterious beginnings. Her father was an Irish adventurer, John Finucane, who by devious and clouded ways had amassed some fortune in Egypt and the Orient. Her mother, according to one story, was the daughter of an Arab sheik; according to another, a gypsy; others ascribed to her the rôle of a woman of the circus, a wandering mountebank. I saw her once and, allowing for all exaggerations, she was undoubtedly of some Eastern strain, — an inheritance apparent in Letty. Madame de Tinquerville had married early an old roué of that well-known family, impoverished and exiled to a minor diplomatic position, and who, shortly after bringing his bride and her fortune back to Paris, left her a widow.

She was, I am certain, thoroughly conscient in everything she did. The corruption she exerted over me was both mental and moral. I had come back to Paris filled with enthusiasm and ambition. My self-discipline disappeared. I threw myself into a life of pleasure and dissipation. My days were disorganized and I obeyed only the craving for excitement, movement, and rapidly succeeding sensations. My old philosophy, simple and proud, yielded to the worldly wisdom of the facile luxury which surrounded me. I saw how easy it was to achieve by social trafficking what men spent lifetimes laboriously to acquire.

Not that I yielded without a struggle. At times, scenes of extreme violence broke out between us; scenes I

realize now it was her delight to provoke. Though of strong and violent passions, I had always held myself in firm control. What had been an orderly, measured mode of life, contemplative, tolerant, and good-humored, now became a tumultuous succession of days and nights, when every nerve was raw to the exposure. I found myself irritable, suspicious, passing from sudden depressions to feverish flights of gayety; quick at offence and wincing under the new tortures which she invented each day for the perverse delight of proving to herself how completely she held me in subjection. Why I did not strangle her in some blind moment of rage, I do not know.

This I will say: she did not lack courage. It never failed her in the dangerous excesses of jealousy she provoked in me, for, even as my fingers itched to close over her delicate throat, at a sudden smile, at a look in the shadowy eyes, at a caress from her fingers, the heat would vanish from my brain and I would be pliant in her hands. Perhaps it was this constant revolt — the rough, untamed animal in me — that interested her. Did she care for me, or not? At this moment, despite the tragic sequence of events, I am not certain but that at bottom, despite all her malignant appetites, her joy in destruction, her catlike love of cruelty, for some unknown reason, she genuinely loved me, — so far as she could comprehend love. Sometimes I believe that the secret of her attachment to me was in my resemblance to some one whom she had known and loved — as a young girl loves — before the flood of corruption had contaminated her. It may be that I recalled this other by some trick of look or manner. I do not know. I know very little of her past life.

VII

As I try to reconstruct this episode, much of it remains blurred, — a confused repetition of fatiguing emotions; scenes of jealousy no sooner ended than begun again: revulsions in me away from her, weak returns: the obsession of her presence; her caprices and her demands disorganizing all the routine of a once methodical existence. Only a few scenes come back to me vividly. Of her life I know as little as of the motives which ran in her agile mind. I am beginning to see her now with a colder point of view; then I did not understand her at all. We never discussed her life or mine, — that is, what had happened before our meeting.

I do not know her age exactly (perhaps twenty-five, perhaps thirty) yet she seemed always of another generation, and old in the wisdom of experience. I had often the curious feeling of not looking at her but at the mirror of a woman, and of never being able to progress beyond the pale reflection.

As I try to analyze her now, her salient quality was an utter inability to feel pain. Nor do I believe she could understand it in others, even when for her own enjoyment she was its cause. She was, of course, one of those women of over-refined temperament who simulate sensations they no longer can feel, seeking mentally what is no longer a natural impulse. Her curiosity in inflicting pain was of this nature.

Occasionally, however, she was capable of an amazing frankness, whether by cunning or from the inconsistency of her woman's nature. Once, when I sought to penetrate beyond her reserve — the occasion was after an ac-

cidental meeting with her mother as we were driving in the Bois — she said something to me in such prophetic artlessness that to this day I wonder if for one moment this was not the true Letty.

Our carriages had met and passed and for an instant I had felt her suddenly rigid at my side. I looked over and saw something out of Letty's past, — a thin, crooked old lady, very black, bejeweled and grotesquely dressed, who was agitating a pink parasol as though it were a bell-rope, to attract our attention. The next second, and we had passed.

"Your mother?"

"Yes."

She had been too startled to deny it.

"Letty," I said eagerly, for the tone of her voice threw an air of romantic mystery about her figure to me, "don't you want to, — can't you tell me something of your life?"

She shook her head.

"To you, if to any one. Don't ask me. It is too painful!"

She added, and at such moments I felt twenty years rushing in between us:

"Life is only a succession of doors to be closed and never reopened. I never do."

Something made me reply:

"Not very flattering to me."

She looked at me, and answered:

"Oh, you! How you will hate me, some day!"

It was by such unexpected remarks, by the very seeming frankness of an abrupt confession, that she knew how to rouse my curiosity and to surround herself with a glamor of mystery. I believed in her sorrows until the day came when I was shocked out of my fatuity and saw the feline delight in playing with a wounded animal which alone was insatiable in her character.

I have often wondered over that speech and why she

had made it. A sense of the dramatic, a moment's indulgence in absolute truth, a sure sense of the effect on my tempestuous imagination, to be warned of danger? Perhaps, all three.

"Life is only a succession of doors to be closed and never reopened."

It is strange how a phrase remains when a memory has been conquered. This phrase, which summed up all her defiant, selfish, worldly wisdom, has come back to me again and again and, though I am freed of the tyranny of her malicious personality, the poison of her philosophy still lurks in my memory.

There are moments when we look back in cold memory and cannot comprehend the whence and the wherefore of the hot fever that once dominated every sense and drove us through the hallucination of a passion. So with me, to-day.

When I think of Jenny Barnett, I seem to remember a confidence told me by a friend of college days: when I recall Letty, I seem to recall a chapter in some unhealthy romance. It is impossible that I and that David Littledale are one and the same person!

The heart of a man is like running water, — the years in their course purify the moral contagion. I do not know that this is true of all men. Perhaps those who remain in the stagnant pools of little existence never free themselves of the scum of the past; yet it is true of those who venture out into the traveling current. In a large sense, it is true of the generations, that move as great rivers move, — and in this running purification is the hope of all society.

Why, at this period of my life, should I have fallen so completely under the spell of such a woman as

Madame de Tinquerville? It was not genuine love that caused it, for as I conceive love it is the calm of a great certainty, — and with Letty it was never anything but a ceaseless conflict. If not Letty, would it have been some one else? Was it an experience which I was to undergo, — an impulse that came from within me, rather than from outside? Perhaps I understand better to-day the springs of my impulses.

There are in most men two strong and opposite impulses towards women which, at first sight, appear contradictory but are easily reconcilable, as they spring from the two linked needs of their natures and are the key to the many seeming inconsistencies, infidelities, abrupt passions and incomprehensible tyrannies into which their sentimental cravings lead them. A man seeks in woman saint and sinner, calm and tempest, salvation and demoralization.

As architects of life our instincts are towards order and discipline, yet we are eternally seeking the thing that will upset our self-control. We are irresistibly attracted by what threatens our equanimity, enslaves our senses, imprisons our will, — for that brief, fleeting ecstasy which we feel at its fullness only when we are aware that we have cast aside the reins of our government. But, as the abiding instinct of our nature is order, there remains always the ideal of woman, which represents the revulsion to sanity, calm and serenity, — back to which we grope with reverence and to which we fasten with the instinct of self-preservation. I know this is true, though to-day this woman, the woman who is serenity and order, has not come into my life.

So intimately entwined are these two natures, these twin struggling impulses, that they often remain confused and inseparable. This is the explanation of the two tragedies of society, each proceeding from the same

complex source: the phenomenon of a man's marrying his mistress and that darker mystery which remains behind the curtain of marriage, the debasing of an ideal once raised in reverence.

The ease with which I yielded to her dominance, the disorganization into which I plunged, and the violent revulsion which came in the end are explainable, I believe, by this conflict in our nature. But then I did not reason thus, I did not reason at all, and therein lay the danger, — a danger that I shudder now to contemplate.

What was the essence of this corruption which she exercised over me, — that was more moral and mental than physical? It was in the stifling of all the youth and ambition of my nature by the baleful weight of her age-old weariness of intellect. She took a keen delight in seeking out my illusions, one by one; of slowly destroying them before my eyes under her malicious wit. She taught me that all striving was futile, that youth was a season of riotous enjoyment for the wise, and that only fools sacrificed it in a groaning pursuit of an ambition which could never be attained.

"Why strain for the thing that is here, at your finger tips? This is the fullness of life; seize it. What would you seek? — a career? — fame? My dear little Davy, you are not a genius. Your talents are not even considerable. The chances are that after ten years of drudgery you would only have condemned yourself to the bitterness of disillusionment! What do men seek in fame? Just the vanity that a pretty woman has to be noticed as she enters a restaurant. Believe me, the quality of youth, which you hold so lightly, is worth all your drowsy, rheumatic celebrities! You have senses given you to enjoy life with, — enjoy it!"

"And, the end — "

"Who knows what may be the end? Rather remorse than regrets!"

All her philosophy was summed up in this sentence. Yet she was exceedingly punctilious in her religious observances and, although she had a sort of dare-devil courage, she hated so the intrusion of realities that she would turn down a side street rather than meet a funeral.

The struggle to free myself was a hideous one. Again and again I determined to fling off the unhealthy bondage that weighed on my freedom of thought, and as often, from weakness, from fear of giving pain, with rage and hatred in my soul, I temporized. The fear of giving pain! How it holds a man at the last to his own destruction! For I was still innocent enough of what such a world can hold of depravity to believe that, such as she was, she loved me with all the good and bad of her nature.

Once, after a week of mutual recriminations, driven beyond my strength by her simulated scenes of jealousy, I went to her, determined to provoke a final rupture. I can still remember the rage in my heart as I came into her salon that night of the final rupture that calls out the primitive criminal which abides in all of us. For criminal instinct is essentially the instinct of the survival of the fittest, and in that moment when, rightly or wrongly, we reach the frenzy where we must tear from us the arms that hold us back, — we destroy as criminals destroy. I cannot think of what might have happened that night, without a shudder.

I came resolved to wound her on the raw, to force her out of her calm, and in the clash of our hatreds to find my escape. Yet, despite taunts and insults, she remained superbly self-possessed, — complete mistress of the situation. When from very exhaustion I stopped, she looked

up at me, with her smile of Mona Lisa, her eyes sparkling with triumph, and said carelessly:

"So you love me as much as that!"

"Love you?" I cried, choking with inarticulate rage. I tried to continue but I could not. I felt that if I remained another minute in her presence I did not know what I might do. "The end — thank God! The end!"

I flung up my arms, with a horrible laugh, and bolted for the door. But as I went I heard her clap her hands, as a delighted child might have done, and her voice came to me:

"David — you will come back."

And back I returned, to delude myself, once more, with her sudden melting repentence, to listen to her self-accusation, to believe that all she had done wickedly and consciously had been only the instinct of a jealous woman to know how completely she was loved. Not a delectable page in my life. I set it down as it happened, without extenuation. Yet, two days later, I was free of her, forever! She lied to me and I caught her in the lie.

We were to have dined together and to have gone to the theater, but she had written me the day before that she would be forced to leave town. This had often happened and this postponement did not in the least excite my suspicion. A young Frenchman, the Comte Maurice Plessis de Saint Omer, one of my intimate friends, happened to drop in on me, and agreeing to dine together, we set out for Foyot's, near the Luxemburg, bent on an epicurean dinner and a quiet evening.

Maurice de Saint Omer, in the pleasure-seeking crowd in which we moved, had the reputation of being a great dandy and my natural attraction towards him was considerably enhanced by the compliment to my vanity. He

came of one of the great families of France which named its ancestors before the Crusades (his father was the Duc de Saint Omer and the château is the famous one near the Lorraine border). While he lived the life of a thorough man of the world, as it was understood in the Paris before the war, he brought to all relations of life dignity and distinction. He was neither rake nor profligate. Straight, tawny-haired, nose high-bridged and sensitively chiseled, blue-eyed and soft of voice, almost too elegant for our American ideal, his courage and tact had made him one of the arbiters on the field of honor. Why he should have taken to me, I do not know, but he did, and he occasionally favored me with his confidences. My own entanglement with Madame de Tinquerville was known to him. In fact, for months all his influence had been exerted to show me the quicksands into which I was sinking. We were talking of her as we neared the restaurant.

"And La Belle Tinquerville?"

"I was to have dined with her to-night but she was called to St. Germain."

"No use warning you, my dear fellow, I suppose?"

"Evidently not," I answered moodily. "I must work out my fate alone."

"At least — open your eyes."

"In what way?"

"Neither she nor you is the slightest in love."

"What do you call it, then, when one moment you are ready to do murder, and the next you are as weak as a child, ready to believe anything, undergo anything, afraid of everything?"

"My dear friend, I went through that, at the age of sixteen, with a little girl in a *laiterie* who could not write five words correctly and who ran off with a lawyer's clerk. The trouble is you are still sixteen. You know, I

do not discuss women lightly; my principles are fixed on that point. But you have come to me as a friend and as a friend I am once more going to warn you."

"Go on," I said, shrugging my shoulders.

"My dear David, — you have no place in this society of ours," he said, taking my arm. "You have a heart, and you have no knowledge of the conventions of the game. We do not love in this crowd; we play at love; just as we do not discuss; we play at discussing. We meet, to fence lightly and gracefully, with tremendous lunges, — which are always parried. We do not seek a woman because we want her but because twenty other men want her and — we wish to carry off the prize. You are seeking romance, and — it has never crossed our thresholds. This society is old: it refines only on its emotions. It is egotistical, selfish, superficial, and self-indulgent. There isn't a man or woman in it who doesn't love himself or herself better than anything else in the world. Madame de Tinquerville may be better, or worse, than the rest of her set. I do not know. If you were an American nabob, perhaps she might make up her mind to marry you. Luckily, you are not. There is something primitive enough in you to resist and rebel. There is still something young in you, — a piece of a real heart left. When she has completely broken you, dominated you and corrupted you, you will cease to interest her. Bid her good-by before she closes the door in your face."

"Every word you say is the truth," I said impulsively, "but, — then — "

"I know, — I know," he said, laughing, and then, turning to a more serious tone, he added, "Do not think me cynical. I am not. There exist in this world women that are worthy to be loved, in reverence. One day I shall meet a young girl whom I can respect and adore as I do the ideal of womanhood that is in my mother and sister,

but when I take a wife I shall never bring her to this poisoned atmosphere. David, if you were a man of the world, if you could keep to the surface of things, I should shrug my shoulder, but you can not." He gripped my arm tightly. "You are not even a man. Confess that it is only your vanity that holds you, that at bottom you hate this entanglement that humiliates you and corrupts you."

"It is a nightmare," I said gloomily.

"Well, then?"

"In her way," I said, "she loves me."

He stopped and looked at me in amazement at my innocence. I did not understand his look then. I do, now. He started to speak. I can imagine what was on the tip of his tongue but, beyond a certain point his notion of chivalry would not permit him to go.

"In that case, my dear David, I have nothing more to say. Your appetite, at least, is not affected?"

"Not in the least."

"Then a very good solution to all problems is a certain *Canard au vin blanc* and gooseberries, that Carlo will cook for us with his own hands!"

We had ascended the old Rue de Tournon, the Senate rising ahead of us. We entered the restaurant, and the first person I saw was Madame de Tinquerville, dining *en tête-à-tête* with a man unknown to me.

She looked up, saw me, and glanced down again, quickly. We passed into the inner room and took a table. Something exploded in my brain.

"You saw?" said De Saint Omer.

"Yes."

"You are convinced?"

"Quite. The man?"

"Pedro Fornesco, — an Argentine millionaire."

"How long has this been going on?"

"Three months."

I began to laugh. De Saint Omer slipped his hand over my wrist.

"David — it is Providence."

"Thank God," I said loudly, but, despite myself, I felt a cold in the small of my back and a dryness in my throat.

"Will you follow my advice?" he said, studying me anxiously.

"Wait." I put my head in my hands and drew great breaths, while I fought for calm and decision.

"Now."

"You are sure of your control?"

"Absolutely."

"No scenes?"

"I give you my word."

"That must be understood," he said firmly. "No public scandal — no dramatics, my friend, or as sure as you are sitting here you will have to answer to me. Is that understood?"

"I assure you I never was more master of myself," I said, smiling, and, indeed, a cold indifference had come to me. I felt a tempest raging in my brain and somewhere in that tempest a voice crying, "Now or never!"

"Very well, I believe you. Carlo!" The head waiter came hastily to us.

"Carlo. A table opposite M. Fornesco, — the one that is engaged."

"M. le Comte — "

"Carlo — this is an exception. I *must* have it."

His eye met the head waiter's, who hesitated and bowed. We rose and, sauntering into the main dining room, seated ourselves two tables away from Madame de Tinquerville, in an angle that was partitioned off from the rest of the room. When, with an appearance of casualness, I turned to watch her, I saw in her eyes a look

of abject terror. Every such woman believes more or less in the dramatics of Camille and, from that moment to the end, I know Letty awaited the public scene that would strip her sacred reputation and leave her the butt of Paris gossip. As for myself, I was at that moment capable of the greatest cruelty without the turning of a hair: I found resources of self-control in me that astounded me. I laughed, discussed affairs of the day whimsically, and swapped anecdotes, as though out on a collegian's holiday. Madame de Tinquerville watched me from the corner of her eye, never losing me from her gaze, listening, waiting —

Towards the end of the dinner, De Saint Omer said to me:

"You know the anecdote on Gommecourt, — no? Quite amusing. I'll tell it to you. Besides, — there is a moral."

"A moral?" I said, feeling that the comedy was about to begin.

"Gommecourt was a young parvenu of the time of the Regence who had become involved in an affair with a celebrated actress of those days. He was avaricious, vain, prudent, and not without a certain wit, as you shall see."

The conversation at Madame de Tinquerville's table had stopped. De Saint Omer's voice could be heard distinctly, and I knew that Letty was listening breathlessly.

"When it was time for Gommecourt to marry, he was much embarrassed how to break away from his charming but expensive friend. He took up a pen and wrote a long and very tender letter, recalling his past happiness, his regret at the decision of his family, — a very, very moving, affectionate, temperamental and tragic letter, and at the end he wrote, 'I shall never forget, and I send you an order for one hundred thousand francs.' "

"Very handsome," I said mechanically, not yet seeing daylight.

"A little too handsome — as Gommecourt decided, after a very brief struggle. He wrote a second letter, a very tender letter, too, but a little modified in its transports of passion, and ended by announcing a gift of fifty thousand francs."

"Very prudent."

"Wasn't it? You see, Gommecourt was of good, thrifty stock. The more he considered it, the more absurd it seemed to him to give way to his impulses. And then, suppose she had not been faithful? He wrote a third letter, quite formal this time, and cut the sum to twenty thousand francs."

By this time the conversation at the other two tables had ceased, and every one was listening, quite frankly amused at De Saint Omer's vivacious account.

"So, Gommecourt, quite delighted with his two transactions by which he had saved himself eighty thousand francs, arose to send off letter number three. But, halfway to the bell, suddenly he stopped, struck his forehead and exclaimed, 'But, after all, it's simpler than that!' And, returning to the table, he wrote a final letter, thus, —'I have discovered all. Adieu.' "

"Bravo!" I cried loudly, above the ripple of laughter which greeted the ending. "And he was right."

"You like the anecdote?"

"Excellent." I glanced at Madame de Tinquerville and saw her rigidly examining her plate. "But it doesn't fit all cases, — since we are now talking of ruptures."

"Oh, a friend of mine had an even better expedient!"

"I should like to know it," I remarked, pretending to laugh. "One never knows —"

"He simply took his card and marked on it 'P.P.C.' and left it at her home. That, and nothing more."

"Thanks for the idea."

I drew out my portfolio instantly and selected a card. The couple next to us, deceived by my gayety, began to laugh.

"A pencil?"

"Be careful!" said De Saint Omer, under his breath.

"Don't worry."

I took the pencil he offered me, after a little hesitation, and inscribed the three letters.

"Carlo! An envelope — and call a taxi."

"David! No scene."

"Don't worry, I tell you."

I addressed the envelope, slipping the card into it and, the reckoning being paid, rose and stood deliberately facing Madame de Tinquerville. For that one awful moment, which I prolonged, I paid her back in terror the thousand humiliations of those hideous months.

Then we lifted our hats with exaggerated ceremony and went out.

We left the letter at her *concierge's* and went directly to my apartment.

"You have letters — keepsakes — of hers?" asked De Saint Omer.

I nodded.

"Make a package of them and leave them with the *concierge,* to be given to her when she calls —"

"When she calls?"

"Idiot, she will come at once! And now, throw some things in a bag, and come away with me for a couple of weeks' fishing."

As I look back at it now I am filled only with a feeling of nausea. All I can say in extenuation of this period, when the thinking man had ceased and was near to the brute, is that for weeks I had not been master of myself,

that I moved in a delirium of passionate anger, weak jealousy, with every nerve unstrung and every impulse riotous, incapable of either controlling or judging my action.

It is not a chapter that I like to contemplate but, as it was I write it down. For the mystery of evil is that out of it there often comes a revulsion to sanity. I am not sure but in the end it was beneficial. The shock of experience made me see myself as I was, and after the disorganization the primeval spirit of order awoke in me, and now that I am seeking to build up again it is as my own mason, consciously and responsible.

The trouble with the New England tradition is its lack of flexibility. Nothing gives, but it breaks. Yield the slightest, and everything crumbles. We lack a sure sense of values and are therefore at the mercy of little things as well as great. We conceive of man's struggle against the forces of demoralization as the defence of a fortress: one breach made, and capitulation follows. More mature reflection, tempered with a knowledge of good and evil, has led me, I think, to a broader philosophy. We are not intrenched in our beliefs but are mobile forces, constantly maneuvering, constantly at war — turned back here, advancing there — with only the ultimate objective important.

We had been gone but four days when the war broke out and we separated, he to join his regiment, and I to enlist in the Foreign Legion. His last words to me were, "David, my dear friend, if through weakness you return now, you are worse than the most despicable of men, — you will be utterly lost. After this, Madame de Tinquerville will hate you or love you beyond anything else in life, — and either will be fatal."

I did not see her again. I threw myself into the war as a salvation, seeking an escape from a life that filled me with horror, hating and despising myself, asking only to forget. She wrote me many letters, frantic, repentant, imploring an answer, and then a final one — the rage of a woman scorned — full of veiled threats. I did not answer them.

I heard indirectly that she had entered the Red Cross, devoting herself with a courage and determination that had surprised every one. When the memory had receded and my normal self had returned, I was willing to believe that the mobilization which had come to France as a moral re-birth had perhaps reached the Magdalene in her, — as in how many others! Yet, I wondered how much the dramatic impulse was responsible.

But the scales had fallen from my eyes. It was not against the woman but myself against which I revolted with every force in me. The strange thing is that, once the rupture was complete, she passed completely out of my existence, and in a fortnight I was looking back upon that period with incredulity. Events were too colossal to remember private sorrows. I felt myself, at last, one of a great army of action, redeemed to meaning and purpose.

Those who did not see the mobilization can never have a conception of all that war can bring of sublimity and purification, — as those who never knew the first winter in the trenches can not imagine the long horror of that soul-crushing defence. If the war had only ended in the first year! But, it didn't. Incredulity succeeded the first flaming rise of faith. Neither the end nor the issue can now be foreseen. Those who had faith remain in that faith; others, to whom faith had come as a revealing experience, have lapsed into the old easy habits. Life has

readjusted itself along the lines of war, and society has returned to its old divisions! So it must have been with Madame de Tinquerville. By the end of the year the impulse had burned out. The daily thing ceased to be dramatic. Her old nature asserted itself. She drifted away to England, and then to America, gradually and easily back into the life of self-indulgence and pleasure she craved.

I had not heard of her for over a year and a half when, dragged out of the inferno at Verdun, transported from a field hospital, more dead than alive, to the Hospital du Val du Grace at Paris, I came out of a battle for life to have a letter from my brother placed in my hands, announcing his marriage to Letty, Madame de Tinquerville.

I went off into a delirium and for weeks fought against a return to life. But the obstinate nature in me triumphed over my will, and I found myself at last convalescent, facing the issue of some day confronting the brother I loved with the knowledge of the secret which must always be between us.

The thing that frightens me, that leaves me cold when I think of it, is this: Can she still have power over my senses? I say I am certain that I never loved her, that this yoked hostility, this mutual tyranny could not be love, and yet — Something there was that was insidious and instinctive, something that blinded me and stopped my ears to warnings, and sent me to her with the obsession of pursuit and conquest. I have seen infatuation in other men and understood it, yet in myself it still is incredible. If it had to be, I only hope it is a fever that has burned itself out and left me immune for the future. — Yet now, as I stop to analyze myself and my motives, as I look back at that scene in the Café Foyot (I think I suffered as much as she did), and remember the first

wild leap of animal rage when I saw her with Fornesco at her side, I wonder —

If I were only sure that I could write — Milestone Number 3.

VIII

November

To-day I saw my brother, Alan, after six years. Through a chance meeting, I found him living in the Luxembourg quarter. A girl answered my knock. We stood confronting each other, mutually surprised. I remembered her among the restless habitués of the Abbé de Thelême and the Café de Paris, in the old days. The paint and artifice were gone. She stood there, dark-eyed, frail, olive-tinted, considering me suspiciously, her woman's instinct warned of possible danger to the thing she sheltered from the world.

"*Tiens;* it's you, Toinon!"

She started forward and looked at me intently, but in her multitudinous conception of man, my face was but a blur in the panorama.

"It's me you want to see — what's your business?"

"Does Mr. Alan Littledale live here?"

"And if he does?"

"I am his brother."

Instantly her manner changed.

"Ah, you've come to take him away, then?"

Before I could answer, a voice from within cried querulously: "*Qui est là?*"

The next moment a big frame, topped by a shaggy head, came into the anteroom.

"Hello, Alan!" I said, extending my hand.

He drew back, scowling and undecided.

"What the devil brings you here?"

"My dear fellow," I said, smiling. "You do happen to be my own flesh and blood and, no matter how we've fought in the past, we're both Littledales, to the end."

Now, Alan had scoffed and stormed against all our traditions but, despite all, there still remained a lingering pride in the name. He relented a little bit, — though with ill grace.

"If you're coming in to lecture me — "

"Don't be an ass, Alan," I broke in good-naturedly. "I'm no more saint than you are. Well, am I to come in or not?"

"You can come in."

I had expected a shoddy, disordered interior. The little apartment was immaculate; flower-boxes, red and white geraniums at the balcony which gave on a garden; neatness, order, charm. I sat, asking no questions, — puzzled. Was it from love of the man, or from the denied natural instinct towards home-building? Toinon served the dinner, which she had cooked herself; hesitated and then, at a sign from Alan, sat down with us. When Alan left the room she turned to me and said, in a warning voice: "He is very ill."

Down the hall I heard him coughing.

"How ill?"

She shook her head.

"Does he realize — ?"

"No, no."

Dinner over, she cleared the table deftly and converted the room into a salon, brought the tisane to her invalid, lit our cigars and, drawing up her chair before the fire, began to crochet. But, all at once, looking up, she said:

"If you'd rather be alone?"

"Stay, of course."

I, studying the end of my cigar, waited, feeling his defiant glance on me.

"Shocked?"

"Why?"

"You always were sanctimonious when it was a question of doing things openly."

"I haven't come here to quarrel," I said, smiling. His characterization at the moment struck me as grotesque. So far, we had barely skimmed the surface of things, and I felt the underlying hostility of his attitude. Resolving to take the bull by the horns, I said:

"Alan, before we bury the past, as I hope we'll do, I want to tell you that I blame myself. I was unjust; we were all unjust to you. I regret it with all my heart."

He stared at me, as a man grudging to relinquish his advantage.

"What good will that do — now?"

"You are right. It can do no good — now. But we can't talk as man to man until we've had it out. So now you know how I feel. As for the rest — I've done a lot of things, been a bigger fool than you've ever been, so, your adjective doesn't apply."

He looked at me quizzically.

"You've changed; changed a lot! You talk like a two-fisted man. How long have you been away from that precious family of ours?"

"About five years." I drew a letter from my pocket. "It was through Molly I heard of you."

His face softened. "The one human being in the family."

"And Rossie, Alan."

"Yes, yes, — Rossie," he said hastily. "Had he lived — but he didn't. Great God! What a family! As much human affection as you can squeeze out of the

hind foot of a horsefly! You — you were one of them, but I — God knows why — I was different. I was stifling in that atmosphere of smug egotism." His voice rose as his face set in anger. The girl looked up from her knitting and then at me, anxiously, but I knew that it was better for him to give play to the pent-up grievances of years. "I was stifling. I tell you — starved! A home? A mockery! A gallery of granite statues. I can't remember one single time having known what it was to have a father or mother. I never knew a word of sympathy, a look of love. You made me believe I was a lost soul — a gallows bird — you made me believe it myself! Why? Because I had warm blood in my veins, because I was human, had imagination, ambition, wild animal force. I, who was worth the whole lot of you, you crushed out with your cold, damned superiority, your conventionality and your pride in yourselves. And now, you come here and acknowledge you were wrong! Sublime!"

"We were wrong."

"Wrong? Can you give me back these ten years? Can you make me what I should have been? Great heavens, this decent little devil here has got more of a woman's heart to her when she brings me my medicine than the whole blooming lot of you ever dreamed of!"

Toinon, who only half understood, looked up.

"What are you saying about me, *mon ami?*"

"Only good things, and only half of what you deserve," he said, laying his hand on her shoulder. He sat down, exhausted, and leaning over, buried his head in his hands.

"Now, you know what I think, what I shall always think. At that, though I hate it all — your narrowness and priggishness and holier-than-thou attitude — you've left your confounded Littledale pride in me. I *am* one

of you, under my skin, or else I'd marry the only human being — " He stopped, looked at me and shrugged his shoulders. "Don't worry. I won't. Give me Molly's letter."

When he came to a part that told of my father's ill health, he frowned and looked up. "That's why you've come round, is it?"

"What do you mean?"

"To take me back with you — grand reconciliation — prodigal son — and all that sort of stuff?"

"I had no such thought," I answered warmly. "As a matter of fact, I am not going myself."

"You're not?" He looked at me, too sharply for comfort. "Why not? Easiest thing in the world for you to get leave in your condition."

"I want to get back to the Legion," I said, looking away.

He saw there was more than I wished to say and probably he ascribed it to a different reason for, the letter read, his manner changed, and he said:

"Looks bad for the Governor. Well, I've nothing against him. A good sort, in his way, and as he saw; a civilization that passes away with the rising flood. Good sort — but utterly without significance. No — I won't go back. What a farce — to play the prodigal son! Why, Davy, I've *lived!* You haven't, none of you has. I've lived — I've seen — I've been down in the depths and seen! And you've gone on playing at being eighteenth century Littledales, and never realizing that you don't count! You don't even realize what America — the new America — is!"

"I think I suspect it," I said, surprised at the turn of the conversation. I had come, I think, rather patronizingly, and I found myself yielding to a mental supremacy.

"Your kind still believes in government by individuals; you can't even see what's coming. It's mass that counts, to-day. I don't say 'majorities': the world has always been governed by organized minorities, and it always will be. You don't know your generation; I do; I've been one of them. I know what's coming!"

"You don't think much of our generation, I gather," said I, startled at the way his thought had run with mine.

"Of the generation of our kind? Precious little!"

"Well, Alan — that's about my way of thinking."

"Honest?"

"Why not?" I said, amused.

"What's happened to you?" he said, pulling at his chin. "Aren't you satisfied with being a Littledale, with a Harvard accent, and a number of good clubs, and parading up and down this private preserve God made for you? You haven't lost faith in your Divine right of being a Littledale? Good God — he has!"

We broke out laughing and, leaning over, struck hands with a resounding clap.

"Davy, damned if I expected this!"

"Well, Alan, you've been knocking round one way. I've knocked round another: between us we must have gone up and down the scale," I said, settling back. "Well, what have you gotten out of it, and what do you think of this funny old world of ours?"

He looked at me a long moment, still a little suspicious of me.

"I enjoy it," he said, to my surprise.

"Really? As for me, I've had about everything I started with knocked into a cocked hat."

"Then there's hope — so long as you cling to some sort of code."

"Wonder if I do."

"Aren't there some things that you wouldn't do, no

matter what happened? You wouldn't forge — or cheat —"

"Well, hardly."

"Well, David, that's moral. Suppose my ideas shock you. They do most persons. You asked just now what I've picked up these ten years. That's about the most important, — judging men by their codes. A man who's got a code of morals is moral, whether he's a libertine, a horse thief or — a minister. We start with about a hundred and fifty inhibitions that are poured into our ears; we end with about five or six fences which, no matter what happens, we won't cross."

"Don't get you."

"Take your man of the world, who considers every woman fair game; go further down; take one who'll think nothing of taking a woman to pay his debts, use one woman to pay what he gives another; yet there are certain things he won't do. He won't cheat at cards. That's a code. Take your criminal type. If there is something stops him somewhere — say that it's only going to the gallows without 'peaching' on a friend — that's a code, — his code of morals, and, by that, he's moral!"

"You're not serious," I said, laughing.

"Never more so. Think me crazy — wild — eccentric — anything you want. I'm looking from the bottom up towards your top-heavy society and your morality, and I tell you that it's only the man who won't stop at anything, who'll cheat, lie, steal, seduce a young girl, traffic in women — a man incapable of a code — that is absolutely, hopelessly immoral. Look here; you're still looking at things from a moral point of view; you can't help it. I'm just looking on — recognizing things as they are — interested in the human game. You think I'm crazy, don't you?"

"Frankly — yes."

"You think I'm bitter — a rebel — my head against everything. Perhaps so; once, very much so. Not now. Fact, I'm rather more of an optimist than you. If we got down to it, you'd find I had a better opinion of mankind than you."

The excitement into which his defence of himself had worked him started a coughing fit. Toinon came in and looked at me in warning. I rose immediately, holding out my hand.

"Well, Alan, I don't have to agree with you, do I, to say that I'm honestly glad to talk to you?"

"No, no, of course not. I'm a queer dick, probably, but I've got reasons for what I think. Don't ask questions, if you don't want my answers." He touched the decorations I wore and said, "I'm human enough, though, to be glad you're wearing those. Picked up a couple myself, with the Canadians."

"We never heard —"

"I was under an assumed name. Tell them at home about it when you write."

"Alan, there's one thing," I said, voicing a thought that had been uppermost in my mind, "one thing I have a right to know —"

"Oh, go along with you. Of course, you'd have to say the obvious thing," he said, slapping me on the shoulder. "I'm well fixed. Thanks just the same. And don't worry about me; I'm picking up amazingly. Come again. Come again, soon."

He went off into the back room, that I might not hear his coughing.

"Is he any better?" I asked of Toinon, who had followed me to the door.

She shook her head.

"Gas — at Neuve Chapelle."

"No hope?"

"He is condemned."

I stood, moodily incredulous, unable to believe that beneath the vital activity of the brain the inevitable, relentless contagion was working in the body. Then I tried to thank her but made a sad botch of it.

"Whatever happens, Toinon," I said, giving her my address, "remember that I shan't forget what you've done. I shall see that — " She looked at me, so suddenly and so straight that I floundered and stopped. "I meant if ever you were in need — " Still she kept her eyes directly on mine, disdaining a reply and, under that look I stammered: "Forgive me. I'm an ass — but it was kindly meant."

Then, not knowing what to do, I took off my hat and made her an absurdly exaggerated bow. She shrugged her shoulders and closed the door. Which was no more than I deserved.

At the hotel I found a card from Stephen Brinsmade, offering me a rendezvous for the next day. I wonder if he is behind this transfer to Paris, and what it means?

I have set down as nearly as I can remember the circumstances of my first meeting with my brother after the lapse of years. I do not pretend to judge him for I am not in the mood to formulate judgments. I only know that a great new current of thought flowed into my mind and that I felt an eagerness to encounter again the opposition of his strangely antagonistic and dispassionate mind. As for Toinon, I don't pretend to sentimentalize her kind. In my experience nothing is further from the truth than the Marguerite Gauthiers of fiction.

The war, after a brief period of the hysterical emotionalism of mob psychology, has shaken down society into much the same order as before. The rear has its

pagan side, a revulsion to life, a frantic determination to eat, drink and be merry under the shadow of tomorrow's realism. There is an outward sobriety and a decent respect for the black democracy of sorrow. Below the surface, revelry is as *macabre* as ever, for it must compress the passions of a lifetime into a span of hours, and laughter is the hunger for unrealities. A few of Toinon's class — a very few — have turned Magdalene, some genuinely impelled to service, most of them swayed by a new dramatic loyalty to some man who brings them the new sensations of heroic love.

There is nothing sentimental about Toinon. She is a realist who looks life steadily in the face. Yet she, too, has her code, as Alan would have said.

IX

I AM going back to America. I am going home! It has all come about so quickly that I hardly know what I feel. If it were not for the inevitable meeting with Letty — At the very thought everything in me rebels: rather an exile of ten years than the hideous mockery of that confrontation! Yet I am no longer a free agent; a superior destiny is directing all my movements. To what end? For there is no choice; my father has had a stroke and I have been sent for. In my present condition there is no excuse that I can offer. America! Home! Despite even the ominous shadow that awaits me there, I feel everything in me palpitating at the prospect. I sail from Bordeaux in three days, with Mr. Brinsmade.

As I had begun to suspect, Mr. Brinsmade has been the quickening finger in my transfer here. Yet I cannot re-

proach him, given the end in view, — though at first, when he announced that he had secured me my leave, I was inclined in my pride to be a little resentful. Of course, being the legal representative of the great banking house of Gunther and Son, purchasing agents in America for the French Government, a hint from him is all that is necessary. When you reach the inner circle of government you find always a very practical realism, and Brinsmade is in all things a realist. Yet, there is another side to him.

I think I admire him genuinely as much as any man I know. He is utterly free from cant or pretense. He is an idealist with an objective mind. When I talk with him, I feel that I am building my philosophies on the safe ground of things as they are. His knowledge of men and their motives is stupendous. He is privileged to pass in the corridors of the human opera, and though his knowledge gained of the dark places might form another to cynicism, — not so Brinsmade. His mental attitude is like his physical aspect, — genial, tolerant, unhurried, strong, not through bluster but by the authority of his knowledge and experience. The war has waked in him the desire for bigger things in America. He says so frankly, and this new hunger in him, so close to my own awakening, promises to be a great intellectual stimulus to me on the trip over. There is no misunderstanding the quality of his affection for me. I seem suddenly lifted out of a drear monotony of unchanging days, back to a life of extraordinary vitality and promise.

Saw my old friend, Maurice Plessis de Saint Omer. I should not have known him. All the dandy is gone, the feminine languor and grace sloughed off, and from underneath has emerged the grim, unyielding granite of a race of warriors. He is commandant in a regiment of dragoons

and decorated with every honor. The mortality in his family has been fearful, but he dismisses it quickly.

"Nothing matters, — except France!"

His optimism is that of absolute faith. I can imagine how his men must adore him.

Said good-by to Alan, — a stiff, unsatisfactory parting, in which we acted like puppets, rather than human beings. But that is the Anglo-Saxon of it. He gave me his decoration, to put in father's hand, and immediately began to joke about the family fetiches, our cave-dweller's point of view, etc., but I think it was to cover up his emotion. He hates sentimentality.

"Good-by, then — "

"Good-by."

We had separated as though it were the most casual parting in the world. I wonder if I shall see him again.

X

Bordeaux

My last night on the soil of France. To-morrow I leave for America, and for a brief, incredible two months go back into the life that was once mine, but which to-night is incomprehensible, strange and unreal. I am writing in a little bedroom of the Hotel de l'Europe, fitfully awake, and stirred at the thought of the change as I never had believed possible. I don't quite know this sudden self that is come so imperiously into my mood. I am older by a dozen years than this morning, — and by a mental decision that I feel deep down in my heart has been made. To-night I believe has brought a crisis in my life. I am not quite sure of my motives; I do not

know that I wish to examine them too closely. But tonight the old rebellion against the obvious in life has somehow left me. I am conscious of a new point of view. Acceptance of life, a middle-age philosophy, a yielding to safe currents? Yes, all of these and, perhaps, most of all, just an overpowering homesickness, — the cry in my heart to be back among my own kind. For all of which I have Mr. Brinsmade to thank and the strangest of strange confidences.

It began quite naturally and I had not the slightest suspicion of any serious purpose. We were dining in a papier-maché grotto of the celebrated Chapon Fin when, in the midst of the meal, he looked over at me and said abruptly:

"David, ever thought of getting out of the service?"

The question took me by surprise, coming so close to thoughts that had haunted me for weeks.

"At times, when I get the *cafard*," I admitted. "Every one does."

"How long have you been in the Legion?"

"Over two years, now. There isn't much of the glamor left, sir. It gets to be a long drag without much light ahead." A little regretful of my frankness, I sought to justify myself. "You see, I went into it from the spirit of adventure; it was a man's job. I don't say it wasn't also from love of the French. You couldn't have seen that mobilization and not have felt a thrill. Then — you do hate a bully. At bottom, though, it was the adventure, — the biggest thing that had ever happened in the world. You couldn't be there and keep out of it."

"But now — ?"

"Now the thrill is gone," I admitted. "It's grim plugging, not much fireworks or new business. When you've seen Verdun — "

"Yes?"

"When you've gone through that," I said, frowning at the starting memories of that inferno, "it takes it out of you."

"It ages you — " he interrupted, looking at me.

"It's hideous — horrible. I wake up at night even now and then and feel myself back in it. You can't imagine it. I can't describe it. You go in because you're a soldier and a man, — that's all. You expect to die — you know you're going to die; all there is to it is a blind rage for killing and a prayer to die quickly when it comes."

My hand was trembling and my eyes must have taken on that strange far-off glaze which we bring back out of battle, for he stopped me with a sudden grip on my arm.

"Here! That's doing you no good. We'll talk of other things."

I looked at my hand, which was shaking, and feeling an attack of nerves impending, I rose hurriedly and left the room.

"It takes you like that," I said, when I had fought it out and returned. "I'm sorry. I'm much better now. I don't get it often."

He looked at me gravely.

"Good heavens, man! Are you going back in that condition?"

"It won't take a month to get me in shape."

"It still attracts you?"

"I hate it."

"Why, then?"

"Because," I said, shrugging my shoulders, "because I hate this other thing more, — this sitting out of it, when real men are doing!"

He hesitated, and then leaned forward.

"David, if you ever make up your mind — if you feel

you need a longer time to pull yourself together — or if you want to get out — let me know. That's all."

This hurt more than he could understand, and my answer must have been brusque, for though he spoke out of affection for me, he deserved it.

"Look here, Mr. Brinsmade, I don't want things done that way."

"I only meant — "

"Thank you, but there's too much of that, already. Question of pride; that's all."

He was tactful enough not to insist and turned the conversation. Towards the end of the dinner, and a magnificent bottle of Château Margot 1896, he said to me:

"David, you are a hard man to talk to."

"Oh, no — if you talk directly."

"All right: suppose I do. Let's talk about Anne."

"About Anne!" I exclaimed, taken off my guard.

"Suppose I should tell you, point-blank, I want you for my son-in-law? Well, what astonishes you? My frankness?"

"Why sir, it's very kind of you," I began lamely, "but, Anne — ?"

"Exactly. As to Anne, — I'm convinced she cares, always has cared," he said, leaning forward. "I know something happened. I don't know whether you want to talk about it. Really, I should appreciate — "

The interview had taken such an extraordinary turn that I found myself, without surprise, answering:

"Mr. Brinsmade, quite frankly, I am not in love with Anne."

"I know that now, but — "

"Once, for a time, — yes, I thought so. But neither of us had the right to be thinking of such things, then. It was a boy and girl affair."

"Quite sure that was all?"

"Quite. The trouble was I showed her what I felt, or thought I felt, and from that came the inevitable complication and misunderstanding. We were both very stubborn. Mr. Brinsmade, there's another thing, since we're speaking plainly," I added, suddenly impelled to frankness. "Do you realize that in these years many things have come into my life? I wonder if you would feel as you do — "

"David, you have been tried; that shows in your face," he said, looking at me keenly. "I have been a young man myself, and I don't pretend to misunderstand you. Perhaps this is unfair to you — "

"Mr. Brinsmade, there was a woman — I almost went on the rocks two years ago," I said abruptly, and immediately regretted it.

"Are you your own master to-day?"

"Yes — thank God."

"Absolutely certain?"

"Absolutely."

"That's all I want to know," he said, as though satisfied by the estimate of his own eyes. "I appreciate your confidence, and like you for it. I'm not partisan for the wild oats theory but, sometimes, when you've been through the mill, it does leave you with a sense of values." Our eyes met, and each nodded in silent comprehension.

"Now, let's go on. Was there ever a question of pride in it — on your side?"

"Frankly and naturally, yes. I have no intention of going through life on my wife's pocketbook."

"Good. Now the decks are cleared. As I thought. You've been frank. So'll I. Take up this question of money. What is money? Opportunity. If men like yourself, who have ideas, energy, and ambition, refuse to take the opportunity money offers you, — who profits? Some well-groomed little parasite who will loaf through

life genteelly until the day when the real people rise and take it away from him. And quite right, I say. And that is what I don't intend to have for my daughter." He cited names of men, men in public life of our acquaintance, whose start in life had been facilitated by the fortunes of their wives. "Look at it from my point of view. I've made what I've made, and I want it to count in this world. David, what do you intend to do in life?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Fight through the war."

"But, after?"

"After!" I said incredulously. "I may take up the study of architecture again, unless — unless I am able to do what I really want, — which is to write."

"So I supposed. Don't decide quickly. The current is all the other way. We are a country of action, and you've got that in you. I don't make mistakes in men. The real Americans are not those who sit and meditate; they are those who are laying the foundations. Write? What is the future? Deceptions. You know I'm not a low-brow, as they say. Every night, before I go to sleep, I read an hour in Balzac. Books are half my life, so what I say to you I say without narrowness. But what are our writers to-day? The servants of a great public that wants to be amused, diverted in moments of relaxation; a great mass that is striving, combating, contending, — a public of children. Is that all you want to do? Amuse them? Write for yourself: you'll be over their heads — misunderstood — if not ridiculed! The current is against you. We move rapidly, and we read rapidly; a moment to laugh or dream, as we read on the train. Hard for you, — yes, but what do individuals count, to-day?" He laid his hand on my arm. "Commerce, science, public affairs. You like a man's job. That's where it lies, and it's our kind that must lead. Jump

into the fight. Wealth and education are not only opportunities but responsibilities: that's what we must understand. I said I want you as my son-in-law, Davy. It's more than that: I want to invest what I've made in a man that counts. I want you with me. I want to feel when it comes time for me to step out that I'm passing on the power to count for big things to some leadership I've inspired."

He talked some while in this strain and, despite myself, I felt myself yielding to his persuasion. Brinsmade is not a selfish man. Among his own friends he was looked at rather askance for his progressive tendencies. I found myself thinking, with pride, "Here is a man, thoroughly American, who has a sentiment of nationality; who does not look at life from a detached point of view but has a sense of being one in a multitude with a higher loyalty than his own interests — loyalty to the name he bears — and a pride in the America that will come!"

I think he saw the effect he had produced on me and, shrewd lawyer that he was, he did not insist. I left him, exceedingly flattered and already inclined to the pleasant ways he opened to me.

Just why I should feel any compunction is the thing that surprises me, now. Yet I do feel, — well, if not compunction, a little uneasiness. After all, up to now, whatever I have done has been done impulsively, without a second thought as to the advantages or disadvantages to me. This is another thing. For the first time, I am looking on life with a middle-aged estimating of values, — and to-night is like a valedictory to a youth that has fled.

In one way I almost resent the very frankness of his discussion with me. For now I am somehow uneasily conscious that there must be a certain grim deliberation about my future conduct. And I ask myself again, "Is

this a new phase of life into which I have entered, — a new milestone left behind?"

There are other things which haunt me. I know that with Brinsmade's influence with the French Government it would be an easy thing for him to procure my discharge and, under the circumstances, with my past record and my present condition, who could criticize me? I have the feeling that this is in the back of his mind, and looking ahead and wondering what may happen when I meet Anne again, I cannot help wondering if to-night I am not stepping out from the bonds which have forged my destiny here to a foreign land, to those whose every thought and action is strange to my traditions. The thing is so obvious I cannot avoid facing it. If only it had come unperceived and by hidden ways: would it have been easier for my pride and my self-respect?

The trouble is that during my convalescence I have been aware that the terrific strain on my physical energy has left a moral inclination towards the easy way through the future. This physical and moral vitality in us is of course inseparable. I have noticed that as men's bodies grow old a tolerance of social laxities comes with it. Women in moments of physical exhaustion are most vulnerable. The effect of shell-shock on the moral fabric, even in officers of the highest character, is well known. And then, there is something else. Comrades of mine, who have fought with me with unimaginable bravery, return from death with the feeling that they have spent all their vital energy and looking to society to assure their future, as a right acquired.

To-night I feel old, with the sense of duty accomplished. I have done quite enough, I tell myself, in my passage through the inferno of war. If now, when oppor-

tunity offers, it pleases me to dispense with the bruising struggle for existence, who has the right to judge of my actions? Certainly not those who have not dared what I have dared.

All this is really rather morbid: both my will and my body have given beyond their strength and are still convalescent, or I should not be troubled with such sickly doubts. Well — who knows? Is this a mood, or a decision? To-night, frankly, I feel I have done enough to have earned my right to rest. Let others do their part. Milestone Number 4.

PART II

PART II

I

December
Littledale

ALMOST three weeks have passed since I last wrote a line in this book, — three weeks crowded with events which have turned the current of my life into ways of which I never dreamed. I am here, in my old room, a log fire snapping in the fireplace, the window sills banked with snow, and the clock on the landing below has rung eleven times. I have sat before these written pages a full half-hour, tempted to destroy all, — yielding to the sense of the futility in my life. Has it been but three weeks since the night I sat and listened to Brinsmade in the Chapon Fin at Bordeaux? To-day every logical consideration is scattered to the winds as I realize with an acute pain what sport we are in the veiled hands of chance. Into my life has come the greatest exaltation and the greatest emptiness, so inextricably interwoven that I know not what to name it, pleasure or pain, — this emotion which has imprisoned all my faculties with the sudden awakening of a great love.

I do not know that I shall ever see her again; I have given my promise never to seek her out. Why? I do not know. Simply because, for her own reasons, she implored it of me, and to her slightest wish I would be as powerless to offer opposition as to consciously give her physical pain. I have spoken of the mystery of good and evil that is in each of us. To-day it is a mystery more baffling than ever. As I look back now, what I marvel at most is that I should have met Bernoline at the

very moment when I had so complacently, in my worldly wisdom, accepted the easy path held open to me. Two women will ever remain before me as the embodiment of the twin contending mysteries in my soul: Letty, who stands as the sinister embodiment of all those fierce, primal instincts which in civilization we name evil; and Bernoline, who has reached deep into the hidden needs of which I was ignorant and revealed to me a self I did not know, — a self against whose imperious idealism I rebel, but a self which will, to the end of my days, dominate me and determine my actions. One has vanished into the wilderness of men, and the other returns, a sinister memory, which is a cross to be borne day by day, behind a mask that must forever stand between me and my brother.

At Bordeaux I had but explored the mystery of evil; the mystery of good was still unknown to me.

As I look back now, every word, every object, every outline is clear to me from the first instant of our meeting. It is as though with the sudden stirring of my deeper nature every little sense awoke. There are colors, the oranges in a straw basket, the blue of a porter on the dock, the gray whirl of her scarf against the blue Breton cape on the upper deck as we passed out of France, the red luxury of the sunset that swam over our heads that last day at sea, — all these tints and a dozen others are associated in the minutest visualization along with the scent of tarred ropes about us at Bordeaux, the clean brine of the sea which held us ten unforgettable days, the sound of the forecastle bell tolling off the hours, and the light, slipping step which I would know to-day from a thousand others.

It was in the wet dawn of late November that I first saw her, and the memory starts up before my eyes, even

to the most irrelevant details. I can see again the moist dock, the gray flanks of the ocean liner shutting out the sky, the masts dissolving in the morning mist and the white splotches of faces flowering against the rails. The salt, tarred smell of the sea is still in my nostrils and I am back in the crowd of leave-takers, saying the last broken farewells; an old couple clinging to their son, a sailor with his sweetheart. Boatswains are piping, cabmen swearing, loiterers gazing; a smirched face looms as a little wharf rat bumps against me, and — I look up and see her again — as I saw her for the first time.

She stood heavily veiled, her arm about an old servant in a Breton cap, who was weeping her heart out, — a very old woman, wrinkled and stooped, whose lips trembled, whose eyes never ceased their staring intentness. It was not simply grief at parting, often hysterical in servants, but something inexpressibly deeper; not so much a protest as a final resignation to a weight of sorrow beyond old age's power to bear.

At this moment, her young mistress lifted her veil and, as she bent forward to kiss each shriveled cheek, I saw her face out of the mist and the blurred crowd — as I see it now — and no second glance could ever add to that instant conviction. The whistle blew above us. The old woman cried something hysterically and caught the young hand to her lips. I heard her murmur a blessing, I saw her try to disengage her hand, and then as, helplessly, she sought for assistance, her look met mine. I know that my eyes were dim. She saw and trusted them. I stepped forward, bare-headed.

"Permettez — Madame?"

"Merci, Monsieur — vous êtes bien bon."

The veil dropped again. I put my hand under the old woman's arm and drew her slowly away. When I returned, her young mistress was already on the boat.

I do not know that I can describe her, for when I see her face I see only the eyes, dark, round and big, without guile or artifice, eyes that were open and luminous, and yet eyes that were stricken with a suffering too deep to be cast off in tears. It was not what I saw but what I felt, — the inner quality, the sweet dignity, the gentleness and the high aristocracy. Women, before, had been to me types. In her, instantly, I discerned a being set apart, whose choice of action could never proceed from feminine acceptance of the hour's fashion in dress, thought and standards. She was what she was, and would go forward always along her clear path, undisturbed by the troubling blast of the popular wind. I knew that for the first time I had looked into eyes which no ugliness, no meanness, no unworthy thought could ever trouble, and that I was of the privileged of the world to have seen her. One look, a look that might pass a thousand times — one look in the mists of the dawn, in the scrambling, shoddy crowd — and yet, for that one instant's fugitive understanding, all that I had been and was became as nothing, and my destiny — for better or worse, for ill and pain and sorrow, emptiness and loneliness — was irrevocably determined. Yes, mystery of the good and evil that is in us! From the pain of evil, we struggle back to sanity and clean air and memory covers over the scar, but from the emptiness and the ache that, in the mystery of good, love may lay upon our lives, what escape or what answer is there?

Last night I left off when the memory was too acute and my eyes could no longer see to write. To-night, I come back to it, impatiently, with a longing to reclaim every word, every look, every precious minute, and fix it indelibly before me. The situation here is hideous. I seem to be walking over a mine that sooner or later will

go off, while I can do nothing but await the final catastrophe. To write is to return to her, to hope again that somehow, somewhere, without being false to my promise, I shall see her again.

II

THE gangplank swung out as I stepped on the deck, the air shrilling with the chirp of whistles and the creak of pulleys. I shouldered through the motley crowd and joined Mr. Brinsmade on the upper deck. I remember how solemnly I looked down on the France I knew and loved, and with what reluctant apprehension of the future I watched the gray hawser stiffen.

"Strange, to be going?"

"Yes — incredibly strange," I said slowly. "I can't quite believe it; for whole months to be a free agent — no longer a part of a great orderly machine, without eyes or ears or will. I think I have forgotten what the other world is like."

"Do you regret this?"

"Regret it? Yes, it's hard to leave a thing unfinished when you've gone so far. And, though I've hated it and cursed it, well, it is a different conception of humanity, after all, this doing a thing as a mass. I've accepted it, readjusted myself to it. I think it's not the question of liking it or not liking it; it's the feeling of the inevitable and the wanting to measure up to other men. I stopped debating with myself the day I saw a man at my side go to his death. He was a scullion out of the kitchen of a New York hotel — Carlo Roger — deserter and rascal. He could have remained, and no one

would have cared. He did his duty, unnoticed. I couldn't do less."

I looked up, and then down, and added, "Better hold on tight to me, Mr. Brinsmade. I feel like making a jump for it."

Laughing he passed his arm through mine and pretended not to notice the dimness in my eyes.

"You've known humanity at its best, my boy," he said. "And I, thank God, have had a glimpse of it. And when you're like myself, a weather-worn old lawyer, who walks behind the scenes, that's something to be thankful for. Well — if they're not of our race — they're the same human beings: we can share that."

"I feel that way."

A group of ambulance drivers descended upon us, with their fragmentary chatter.

"Boat in had a close shave."

"Missed a torpedo by twenty feet."

"Come off! Every one's seeing submarines!"

"Hope we pick one up."

"Say, what's the matter with this boat?"

"Off for the good old U. S. A!"

A great blast of steam shook the air above us, sending its wet vapors against our cheeks. The gangway swung clear and rolled back on the dock. Another moment, and the big ship trembled beneath our feet and slowly and definitely veered out against the straining hawsers.

We left the noisy exuberance of the crowd and went down the deck, in search of quieter moods.

"Here's our spot."

I followed Mr. Brinsmade and slipped between two lifeboats. Then, abruptly, we stopped. The railing was already tenanted by a young woman.

If she heard our exclamation she did not change from the rigidity of her pose. We hesitated, moving to one

side, and lifted our hats in a sobered deference and, I knew, through our minds flashed the same thought: she was French and France was receding from her eyes.

One hawser still held us to the land, like a faint memory stretching back into the past. Then a sudden hissing contortion whipped over the widening waters. And so, with the parting of that link, one chapter had ended for me and another, that in the wildest flight of my imagination I could never have divined, had begun.

Instinctively I raised my eyes and recognized my chance acquaintance of the dock.

She had fallen back against the life boat, arms rigidly extended, holding the railing from her. A gray film hid her features, wound about her neck and stood out in a long flutter, a ripple of light against the dark unanimity of her costume. Youth and sorrow are two great emotions which cannot be disguised. I felt, despite the rigidity of the body which told of the stricken soul, the young grace and dignity. I hoped that she would notice me, but she remained in staring oblivion. Yet, though I had spoken but a half dozen words to her, I can remember how keen was the sense of her presence at my side and how, on the instant, I forgot my personal emotions and seemed to be entering into the moods of the woman whose first glance had brought me a sense of intimacy.

I looked, and then I looked away, with a guilty consciousness of trespassing on her grief. Yet, though my glance was averted, I was looking back with her eyes. My companion spoke to me: I did not hear.

I was thinking of the wrench of old affections for her — the venture into the uncharted new — the fading of the homeland that was in her heart by a thousand memories.

Below, the swift currents of the Garonne ran from us, swift as the currents of time. Faces of blue-shirted dock hands grew blurred. Flashes of red trousers, gray-blue uniforms, brown and black of women's dresses merged into a momentary tapestry. The ungainly, lumbering motor-boat, with a hulking colossus balanced at the tiller, dropped behind. Blue-tiled roofs slipped away. Cathedral spires came out against the horizon, like the spoutings of huge sea monsters. The grassy shores flowed back with the current. Wharves, factories, lean shipyards with naked iron arms extended, tilted ships discharging cargoes, brown vineyards combing the aged slopes, tramp steamers in dusty garments, Swedish and Greek, under the imperial banner of Britain, the Tricolor, the Stars and Stripes; tubs, derelicts, old men of the sea, reclaimed and pressed into service, — all the multiple, incongruous aspects of war crowded about our passing, and always that revelation of the human note, the swarming sea adventurers, undaunted, incredulous of the odds, contemptuous of man's malignant genius for slaying man.

I hazarded another glance at my companion and, perceiving her still oblivious to our presence, my glance remained, my sympathies quickened by a hundred remembered scenes of parting. I could not see her eyes for the veil that hid them but, instinctively, I divined the yearning of their backward look.

Heavens, how I knew that last look! How many times, in crowded depot or passing train, I had seen on the faces of women, dry-eyed and staring, that look of the soul's rebellion, the last renunciation, the last groping for a final memory to bear down the lonely years. France, land of her childhood and girlish dreams; France, of precious sorrows and what affections: France, of her long race and living prayers, was receding before the weakening vision that rebelled.

"I say, Davy."

I came to myself at the touch of Mr. Brinsmade's hand.

"I don't think we've a right here, do you?"

Then, and then only, I realized how profound had been my absorption.

"No, no, guess you're right."

As we started to withdraw, a couple of sailors, preparing to swing the lifeboats for the night's perilous dash into haunted seas, came shuffling up.

"Pardon, Messieurs."

"All right — moving out."

"Pardon, Mamzelle."

The sailor hesitated, shuffled and touching his cap, repeated his request, unnoticed. As he stood there awkwardly, undecided, I stepped to her side, raising my hat.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle. Les matelots."

She turned, and I felt her staring blankly at us, as though in the long blur of faces she were unable to separate friends, acquaintances and enemies. But, immediately perceiving the situation, she thanked me with a little nod and turning, said:

"Je vous dérange — mil pardons."

There was a tired note in the modulated voice that I remember to this day, — the weariness of too much struggling.

From the sailors a chorus went up.

"Pas de quoi, Mamzelle!"

"Ne vous donnez pas la peine."

They made way for her deferentially, fingers to their caps, simple-hearted men, quick to feel and sure to recognize the finer metal.

"Merci, Messieurs."

A slight inclination of her head, and she had passed down the deck to the further rail.

"I didn't realize I was staring," I blurted out.

"Yes — a little too openly."

"Perhaps. It rather got me — took me back to the mobilization, and the depots — the look on the faces of the women; when you've seen it you can't forget it."

We moved to the rear and talked of desultory things, as we hung on the rail and watched the steerage. Below, a returning *permissionaire,* perched on a capstan, was playing on a harmonica the defiant strains of "Sambre et Meuse," a group of cattlemen from a torpedoed ship, stretched about him, basking in the sun. The martial air quickened the blood in my veins. I saw a regiment growing out of the mists of the morning, gaunt, grim and proud, bandaged and limping, returning with their memories from the trenches. I have seen many a dress parade after battle and been thrilled; but I still can remember that first knowledge of the living returning from the dead to the rolling drums of the "Sambre et Meuse."

"I want to love my country like that," I said suddenly. "I want to get the same thrill when the regiment swings up the street — " I broke off. "I don't know just how I'll fit in. I'm afraid they won't understand my way of looking at things. I'm rather dreading the test."

"You'll get that thrill."

"I wonder. We all seem to be pulling for ourselves: liberty, individualism, yes; but real nationalism — the thing that's a religion — the thing you get over here — that makes it worth while to die."

"Wait until we understand."

Some one in the khaki of a volunteer ambulance hailed me.

"David Littledale, '08. Remember me? Joe Hungerford. Heard you were on board. What luck!"

I turned to shake hands. It was the same Joe Hungerford of school and college days, lively and irrepressible,

a pink and white complexion, a mischief-loving eye, a quick smile and a clear visage, incapable of wrong, deceit, subtleties, or an unnecessary mental operation, — a boy, as his nation was young.

"Who'd thought to run in on you, Big Dale? Glad to meet you, Mr. Brinsmade. You know my father — Sam Hungerford, of the Illinois Central? Quite a crowd on board. Say, do you think there is any chance of our sighting a submarine?"

"Same old Joe," I said, laughing. "You wouldn't feel anything if you were being led out to be shot."

"The devil I wouldn't." But, in the midst of a retort, perceiving a familiar face below, he was off, with an exclamation: "Hello! If there isn't Frangipani! See you later!"

"There's your young America."

"Yes," I assented. "And a pretty good sort, too. It does everything but think. That sounds rather hard; but that was what I was, three years ago."

"I suppose it was the feeling of the game, the bigger game, that got you in it?"

"Frankly, yes; more or less. And that's true of most of us. Not all, though. But once in, we got a touch of the other thing."

"Don't be too quick to judge when you get over there," he said, divining my thoughts. "Public opinion is complex, but there is one thing that decides America in the end, always, — idealism. It's a quality that is our weakness and our salvation. It makes us the prey to quacks and demagogues, until we learn to see through them. But it is the air we breathe and no one can lead us long away from it."

"I say, Mr. Brinsmade," I broke in, "don't put me down for the sort of expatriate who goes round damning his country —"

"My dear David," he said, laying his hand on my arm, "don't worry. I feel even more strongly than you do. And it's a big test that's coming; make no mistake. It's our kind that's failing, not America. Somehow, the class that ought to lead, doesn't."

We separated on that, and I went down to arrange my cabin, a little uncomfortable at what I had said, and wondering if my listener had not been all the while smiling tolerantly at my youthful pessimism, — for though I am obstinate in my opinions, I do not express them easily in conversation.

When I returned the early twilight was sifting in. I went to the upper deck, with a vague feeling of uneasiness which to this day I cannot explain. Invisible nets descended between us and the fading world; the ship itself, its masts and its traveling rails, was dissolving in the flowing in of the dusk. I went directly to the rear, and twenty feet away I saw her as I had expected, a blot against the rail. She did not turn at my approach, though we were alone on the creaking deck. Twice I came to the railing at her side, hesitated and turned away. She was there, like a statue of bereavement, oblivious of all but the France that was now but the faint iterated flashing of distant lights.

I do not know how long I continued there, pacing off the deck under the swinging spaces of the night. All my instincts urged me to her side, and all my education warned me against the intrusion. I felt so keenly her utter loneliness, the mysterious sense of some overwhelming sorrow, the exhaustion of an unending struggle, that twice, with some hasty phrase on my lips, I stopped, determined to speak to her. But each time I turned away. Yet, each time, I remember the angry rebellion that came into my heart at the tyranny of convention which interposed between us. Had she been a woman of the people,

— how easy it would have been! But she was not. She was of my own kind, and convention dictated that I should pass on and leave her there in the melancholy of the damp night, eating out her heart.

What was it came to me at that moment? What inexplicable intuition of danger? I had left her with a feeling of my utter helplessness, when, with my hand on the door, I stopped, looking out into the dark void, where sea and sky had disappeared and but a single step led into Infinity.

But a single step and such an easy step! Suddenly I turned, went to her directly, and said:

"*Mademoiselle — pardon, Mademoiselle;* you must not — *vous ne pouvez rester ici.*"

The emotion in my voice startled her. Her head turned hastily; she swayed and leaned heavily on the rail. I felt the stiffening of her body against the impertinence of my intrusion, and all my assurance fled.

"Monsieur, I do not think I understood you."

She answered me slowly, in excellent English, with only the slightest accent.

"I beg your pardon, humbly. Please don't think I mean to be impertinent," I stammered back, "but I don't think it is good for you to stay up here — all alone."

I felt how ridiculous this must have sounded, and broke off lamely.

"By what right?"

"No right, Mademoiselle; just a human impulse, that's all — just the feeling that you are in great sorrow and that you shouldn't be left alone, — not here, at least. I feel it very strongly, Mademoiselle."

"Monsieur, there are some sorrows that are sacred."

The words, the accent, the suffering implied went to my heart. I felt then as I have ever felt since the indefinable superiority of her gentle nature over mine.

"Mademoiselle, I know that this may seem incomprehensible to you; I have been walking here half an hour, before I dared to speak to you, but — but I cannot go away and leave you here alone."

Saying which, I bowed and moved away a little distance and took my station resolutely. Presently she said:

"Monsieur — you will not leave me?"

"I cannot, Mademoiselle."

"Oh, please go away; please leave me alone!"

Her voice broke and, as I hurried to her side, she put her head suddenly down on her arms. A film of her veil whipped by the wind caught my arm, and by this slender bond I held her in my protection.

"Mademoiselle, I, too, am a soldier of France; I have fought with your people: must I turn from one of my own kind who, I know, is in distress, just because of conventionality! You are in distress, and I know it. Please let me judge for you at this moment. You must not stay up here alone. I mean it."

"But I want to be alone."

It was the weak voice of a child that now fought against me.

"I know I am right," I said with difficulty, for then, as ever, all my impulse was to do her bidding. But it was the thought of the void without and that unseen step that gave me courage to resist her. "I know how impertinent this must seem to you. It is not meant that way. Do believe that. You must go down on the lower deck. You really must."

She straightened up and there, cloaked by the night, facing each other, our wills clashed. A moment — a long moment — then, yielding, she turned and I followed by her side. Halfway down the deck she stopped.

"Just a second."

She leaned back against the lifeboat, her hand to her throat.

"Now."

I piloted her below and found her a chair near mine. She suffered me to wrap her up without further objection.

"There are no lights to-night and all passengers are ordered to spend the night on deck. You will be quite alone here. Good-night and thank you."

If she answered me I did not hear her. I left her purposely and went aimlessly through the ship, with something new and strange stirring in my brain.

III

I KNOW now that I loved her from the first meeting of our eyes. I did not realize it then nor for many days after. The impulse that drew me to her was so imperious that I yielded completely to it, without power of pausing to put questions to myself.

That night I was possessed of many conflicting emotions. I was an American again after years of exile, making contact with my own kind, accustoming my ear to old accents, familiar phrases, forgotten bits of slang, my heart warming with their exuberance, their youthful spirits. Even the drummer by my side at the table, nasal, rough and loquacious, was a type so comprehensible that I found myself beaming with grateful pleasure as he talked of "God's country," stretched for the hors d'oeuvres, and addressed his neighbor as "Sonny."

Supper was a hasty, scrambling meal, with the portholes sealed. The crowd was oddly mixed, like a herd of refugees arrived from an inundation; a score of young

ambulance men returning, the gray-blue of a few French officers, sailors and officers from torpedoed boats, crews of cattle boats, commercial travelers, and those endless rovers of the sea, dressmakers and journalists. The conversation, freed by the sense of the abnormal, rose about me without restriction.

"What are we stoppin' down here for?"

"Moon's coming up: waiting for it to cloud over."

"Why that?"

"Clear moon's what submarines like, lady. They can see us, and we can't see them."

"That's how they got us, second night out of Genoa, just a ripple blowing, and full moon."

"What were you in?"

"Three-master, carrying lumber — that we'd landed — return voyage. Well, I ain't got no kick coming. We pulled off ten round trips, and the balance is on the right side."

"Torpedoed?"

"Yep — and sunk in ten minutes."

"Spry work getting into boats?"

"Sure was."

"All off?"

"Most of us."

"Where was your section?"

"We were up in the Vosges."

"Know Harrity?"

"He was down in Verdun with us."

"That was rather hot, wasn't it?"

"Quite hot enough."

"Shucks! I don't believe there's any danger," said a voice.

"If they sank us, it would mean war, sure."

"That is, if it could be proved: and what chance would there be of proving it, a night like this?"

"Guess that's sense, too; besides, there's always a chance at a mine."

Joe Hungerford joined me as I left the table.

"Going to spend the night on deck?"

"It's orders."

A little moonlight had come filtering in between the decks, as the heavy moon rolled up over the horizon. A faint streak ran along the railing and touched the stanchions with the luster of fallen snow. In the shadows we could distinguish shapes stretched out on steamer chairs, while others arrived, trailing life preservers and rugs, with an occasional handbag.

"Quite a picnic."

"Don't like the children being around, Hungerford."

"No, that's not pleasant. If it weren't for that, wouldn't mind having a run in with a submarine. Hello — sounds like the anchor coming up."

We mounted to the upper deck, under the open sky, with its opalescent tints and shifting clouds to the west. Red lights and green lights on ghostlike shadows dotted the stretch of foggy water. Ahead, from the last sentinel of the world underfoot, a shaft of light came whirling in broken iteration, — like a can of fire that a small boy whirls in the night. A group of sailors shuffled by. The shrill of a whistle, the thrum of engines, and ahead the whirling beacon crept around the bow and, returning, slid down amidships. The door shot out its feeble ray of light. A group from the smoking room crowded out to witness the running of the channel. Then, a sudden rise of voices.

"Well, bring on your submarines!"

"If they get us, I take my chances on deck."

"You young fellows are mighty chipper; wait till you get shaken up once."

"Well, you got away, didn't you?"

"Gosh, with that light playing on us, anything ought to hit us."

"Back to the good old U. S. A., boys!"

"Well, enough scenery! Let's start up a game!"

There was a laugh, and the crowd shuffled back to the card room.

"Going to sit in, Littledale? It's a good crowd."

"Perhaps, later."

I went below, bundled up my great-coat, fished out a couple of life preservers, and groped my way to my chair. She was there as I had placed her, but in the black of the deck I could not tell whether she was awake or asleep. I hesitated a moment and then, slipping in, made myself comfortable for the night.

Brinsmade at my right was struggling with a tinder which refused to light.

"Have a *briquet,*" said a voice.

"Thanks."

The next moment the steel struck sparks and an odor of burning tobacco filled the air. Slight as had been the light it provoked remonstrances and down the deck the plaint of a woman was heard.

"I don't see why they allow such a thing as that!"

"No lights!"

"Put it out!"

"Good many persons seem unduly excited about submarines," said the voice of our neighbor, high-pitched, pleasing, if not resonant.

"Well — there's always a risk."

"Hardly. Germany doesn't want us in the war."

"Germany? Think so? From what I've seen of her, she doesn't care what we think or any one else — except what she wants at the time."

Our new acquaintance was silent a moment, as though unwilling to venture too rapidly forward.

"Well, thank God, we're out of it!" he said, at last. "The election settled that. If it had gone the other way, there might be a little more excitement."

"Pacifist?"

"Absolutely."

There was a long silence, broken at last by a question.

"Been over long?"

"Three months."

"In France?"

"Yes."

"So — and you still come back with those ideas?" said Brinsmade's bass voice, studiously polite but with a note of criticism.

"Does that mean you'd have us in the war?" said the other, in a tone which showed that he recognized the criticism and resented it. "To pull the chestnuts out of the fire for France and England?"

"Over on business?"

"No, I don't desire peace to keep on making money," answered the other, with a suavity which suggested a smile. "I am a journalist. Suppose I'd better warn you — a socialist; worse, still — the editor of *The Protest.*"

"*The Protest?* Yes, I read it," said the other. "Then you are Peter Magnus?"

"Now you know the worst."

"Glad to know you. Well, I'm rather on the other side. Stephen B. Brinsmade, — one of the unconvicted rich, I suppose you'd call us."

"Really? And you read *The Protest?*" said Magnus in surprise. "May I ask why?"

"Why I read it? Certainly; to know what the other side thinks." He laughed, and continued with the good humor men of politics use as a cloak but which in his case was the complacency of success. "Honestly, I'm glad to meet you, Magnus, and I look forward to talk-

ing things over with you. That's rather odd, for I suppose we'll get to hating each other cordially. However, I'll promise to keep my temper."

"I don't see why."

"Well — that's my experience. Men can meet in physical combat and, the struggling over, sit down over a friendly chop. They may fight each other with their wits; as lawyers, blackguard each other in public for the benefit of the unsuspecting jury, and retain a friendly liking; but when it comes to a combat of ideas, we seem to acquire a secret antipathy for the man who disagrees with us."

"That's because the conflict of ideas is the most fundamental and irrepressible of all conflicts," said Magnus thoughtfully.

"Quite right." Brinsmade drew on his pipe until the ashes reddened, outlining the fingers which screened it. Then he began to whistle, softly, to himself, drawing in his breath.

Outside, the lighthouse was sinking into the sea, while the whirling beams continued to blazon the sky like flashes of heat lightning. To the south a star swam out from the horizon, swelled and glittered, as a new lighthouse took up its warning. A rift of clouds spread over the risen moon, obscuring the crested ripples that had been following us. A patrol of sailors went heavily overhead, to the sound of a dragging rope, the creak of a pulley, — and through the hiss of cleft waters and the whistle of the wind the thud of powerful engines shook the decks.

"Feels like 'Full Speed,' Davy," said Brinsmade. "Guess we're clear."

"Suppose we're convoyed. Well, anyhow, it's clouded over, and that's a good thing. Hardly think there's any danger," said Magnus.

"Neither did our friends on the *Lusitania*." Brinsmade changed the subject to one which had evidently been in his mind. "So you've been over here in this hallowed land three months, and you come back with the same ideas you started with?"

"Only more so."

"No offence. Most men I know have had their preconceived ideas pretty badly shaken up. That's my own experience. Well — time enough to discuss all that. Only — I'll say this. Whatever you may think of war, and I was a good deal of a pacifist, myself, to have been over here, to see what this old world is capable of in a crisis, gives me a better liking for my fellow man. I haven't always had a very affectionate regard for him. But, by Jove, what I've seen of this people over here makes me respect myself a little more just as a plain human being!"

"You're plumb right there, Mister, whoever you may be!" said a voice back of us, a voice with the nasal Yankee twang.

"It is glorious, I grant you," said Magnus quietly.

"But useless?"

"Quite useless, because it accomplishes nothing toward a final solution; but, of course, where we differ, and, I suppose, in all arguments will come back to it, is that I don't admit the necessity of nationality."

"That's frank, and glad you mentioned it," said Brinsmade, with a certain joy. "For that is the one big thing that has come out of the war, and it's bigger than creed or politics, Magnus. See what happened to your German Socialists! It's the rock on which you've split!"

"For the present, quite true," said Magnus, "but it's the backbone of Socialism and, if we are not internationalists, we are not Socialists."

"Why?"

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"Well — put it this way. You'll agree that war is savagery, and contrary to the spirit of civilization; in other words, that what we are all seeking is a final and enduring peace?"

"Two years ago I'd have agreed. Now, I'm not quite so sure I do believe that is possible in our vision. However, for the sake of argument, go on."

"What is war? Competition. Competition of what? Of rival nationalities. Seeking what? Commercial aggrandizement — subjecting the many to benefit the few. America, Germany, England, France have been at war with each other commercially one hundred years. War is only a commercial ultimatum, when a commercial tariff is too slow. The trouble is, men are guided by their sentiments to think nationally, instead of by their logic to conceive of themselves as a world race."

"You are a Jew, of course, Magnus?"

"I am."

"And proud of the history of your race?"

"I am exceedingly proud."

"And rightfully. It is a wonderful race. But if it had been guided by such theories as you now profess, it would have disappeared centuries ago, like a drop of ink in a barrel of water. Racial solidarity has been the immortality of you Jews, and sometimes — no offence, Magnus — I'm inclined to believe that the instinct that moves many of your brilliant race into Socialism is a contempt of mere national definitions which in your own world-solidarity have no meaning to you."

"The Jewish race is not socialistic," said Magnus, with a note of impatience.

"It is increasingly so, and most of its intellectuals are."

"It was not a Jew, but William Lloyd Garrison, who said 'Our Country is the world.'"

"A fair rejoinder in a debate, but we are not appeal-

ing to the applause of an audience, but, I take it, as two men holding diametrically opposite opinions, honestly seeking to find out what each believes."

"All right," said Magnus, evidently favorably influenced by the other's good nature, for he answered more frankly. "It is possibly true that the Jewish race is most ready to embrace the principle of internationalism on account of its past history. I will grant that. But that does not affect the general proposition. Pacifism, which is good Christianity, is the first step to internationalism, and don't forget that the most determined opponents of militarism are of a Christian sect, — your Quakers."

"Two years ago," said Brinsmade, carefully, "when I called myself a pacifist, I might have denied that. By pacifism then I meant opposition to war, — the belief in the possibility of universal disarmament and settlement of all difficulties by arbitration. But I never associated that with internationalism."

"Am I not logical when I say that pacifism must be considered the first step to internationalism?" said Magnus. There was in his voice the persuasive gentleness of the born debater, who is confident of leading his opponent to the conclusion he seeks. "If you wish nations to renounce warring on each other by arms, isn't it because we are coming to the point of view that we are all human beings on the same globe, artificially divided by national lines? And if it is abhorrent to you that one nation should murder another with gunpowder, isn't it just as wrong to seek by commercial warfare to impoverish and reduce an inferior to a state of commercial slavery, a portion of the same human race?"

I sat up, listening with strong attention. Thoughts which had struggled for clarification in my own deliberate mind started up. Once or twice I had come near

breaking in with a question, so close to my own problems had the debate come. Here were two men discussing theories that might apply in a thousand years, when the immediate problem was this present thing: what should a nation — my nation — do in this world crisis, for its greater good?

"Well, now, Magnus — there's logic in what you say, and I'm the more ready to admit it in that I haven't the slightest patience with what I used to believe."

"What's changed you?"

"France. Keeping my eyes open and seeing things as they are in this world, and not as I want them to be. Your internationalism is a political millennium, which will come just about as soon as the other millennium. I used to think that we were all pretty much alike, English, American, German, and French. I've found out we're not. We're not pursuing the same ideas. The English world has settled down to an easy-going existence, each man sufficient unto himself, occupied in his own private affairs, getting farther and farther away from his national ideal, looking on government as a convenient policeman, a central telephone, and all that. And then, there's Germany — and the explanation of Germany is national solidarity — every man fitting into the national scheme, and every man working for the national aggrandizement. *'Deutschland uber alles!'* We used to laugh at that. I don't. It impresses me now. And it terrifies me."

"Do you want to live under such a system?"

"I'll come back to that. No, I don't want to be subjected to that. That's why I'm done with pacifism. Because the world's up against not simply German armies but the German idea. And we may as well admit that it is the German idea that's got to be destroyed or adopted: no two ways."

"What does the man in the fields, or the man in the street, care about all that?" said Magnus softly.

"If the French peasant and the French workman can understand that, I guess we can," said Brinsmade. "I said France has changed me over to a belief in a strong national feeling. It has. I don't want German militarism, but I want the sort of military education you see in the French army, — preparation, with absolute democracy."

"Compulsory service?"

"Of course. And I want it because I want my sons to be educated into democracy, and I know no better way than sending them out for a year or two to rough it with the fellow who comes up out of the mines and fields, out of the city slums and the wharves. I want them to eat together, tramp together, sleep together, to learn how to talk to each other. I want them to respect a man, wherever found, and I want them to make themselves respected as men. Moreover, I want them to have a vision of what America is and can be. Why? Because the wealth I leave them is going to make them leaders and instead of artificial leadership I want intelligent leadership."

"You'll never get compulsory training in America," said Magnus shortly. "That's one thing I'm not worrying about."

"If we need it for nothing else, we need it to digest our foreign classes," said Brinsmade, warming up; "German, Italian, Russian, Greek, Swedish; we need it for self-education, to form our own race, — a clear-cut, united American type. But of course," he said, stopping suddenly, "that doesn't enter into your philosophy."

"No," said Magnus directly. "To me the greatness of America is that it is not American. It has the whole world in it and, as long as these world elements remain

distinctly defined in their inherited traditions, just so long America remains the natural Parliament of Man."

"The little Sassenach," said a voice out of the night. "Damned if I don't hope a submarine gets us."

Brinsmade laughed.

"Thanks, friend," he said. "I feel almost that way, myself."

"Whether you like it or not, it is so to-day," said Magnus, "and the reason that internationalism will come as an American doctrine is just that. We are international, and not in a hundred years can we be anything else. This to you may seem abhorrent, but to me it is the greatest destiny that could come to us. You would wipe out our links to other nations. I say, keep them; do nothing to weaken them, and make them great bonds of political thought, that America may lead the world."

"What gets me — and by George, it does get me — " Brinsmade blurted out, "is your assumption to speak for my country. Good heavens; my family fought in three wars, and you have been here twenty years and tell me what America is, and — damn it — the worst is, I believe you do know!"

"Yes, Mr. Brinsmade, I do," said Magnus quietly. "What do you know of the great East Side of New York? What do you know of how multitudes think and act, — the great labor organizations, the I. W. W? What do you know of what you call the foreign press? Do you know that there are over four hundred newspapers published in a foreign tongue — German, French, Italian, Swedish, Jewish and Hungarian — and that they represent a circulation of millions? The foreign element that was born abroad, or whose parents were born abroad, represents twenty millions; you represent a dwindling minority. You represent — we are talking frankly — an insular element, and the strange thing is that you still

persist in seeing America in that spirit of nationalism which existed in Revolutionary days. America has passed beyond such limitations, and you don't realize it."

"And this from a man who came to my country twenty-five years ago!"

"But who has, perhaps, a greater vision of your country's mission in world affairs than you have," retorted Magnus.

"You are probably right," said Brinsmade. "You place crudely things that are coming into my mind and the minds of others like me. Probably we are not awake. Have we, the old American strain, lost our inheritance?" He added, as if to himself, "And if so, is it our fault?"

Up the deck a spear of light shot across the night from an open door. A group of young men, emerging from the card room for a breath of air, came shuffling down the deck, singing as they came.

> I was drunk last night, dear mother;
> I was drunk the night before,
> And if I live till to-morrow,
> I'll be —

"Hello there — Littledale!"

I cursed them mentally and returned an uninviting grunt.

"Hello."

"Counting the submarines?"

Four figures loomed at the foot of my chair.

"Some games running up there! Four tables. Better take a hand."

Farther up the line of chairs, a child, awakened by their coming, began to cry.

"Not to-night. And say, if you want to make a night of it, you fellows, tramp the upper deck. People want to sleep down here."

"Yes, Captain," said a laughing voice; but another said, "Shut up, Limpy. The women are round here. Come on: clear out."

The sound of their heavy tramp died out in the distance. A woman behind me sat up, rearranged her pillow, and settled back. The child whimpered sleepily and then grew quiet. In the distance some one began to snore. The ship had begun a slight roll, as it fled, ghostlike in a ghostly night, followed by noises of unseen things; the hiss of hidden waves, a sudden leap of spray, the creak of pulleys, a stifled whistle, and the rumble of the invisible force that thrust it forward.

Magnus laughed.

"Your American inheritance; there it is!"

"Damned if I can listen to any more of that!"

I rose abruptly, kicking the rugs from my legs, and went down the deck. I am, I suppose, too young not to resent unwelcome arguments with a hot intolerance. Socialism had meant to me little more than a name, which I rejected on faith as something akin to anarchy. The voice of the immigrant, speaking for my America, roused in me a blind rebellion. The more so that, while he had cut across every traditional instinct, I was at a loss in the poverty of my mental experience to answer the coldly stated propositions which, despite my will, convinced me of some measure of their truth. Yet what had he done but state in his own words thoughts which had been in my own mind; yes, even those opinions which had been surging uppermost, — that, in the coming test of a changed democracy, my generation had let slip the leadership that was its by inherited responsibility. I could say this to myself, yet I could not brook it from another. Why? Perhaps Mr. Brinsmade was right, and in the conflicts of man to man there is no antagonism so deep-rooted, so unreasoning, so obedient to inherited repul-

sions, as that antagonism which in the field of ideas has led men to persecute, to torture and to stamp out one another with the fury of unreasoning beasts.

Of this reflection I was not then conscious. I felt only the resentment of the man of action for the man of thought. It was not the ideas, but the ideas in the mouth of Peter Magnus which aroused my fury. I remember standing a long time forward, sheltering myself behind a bulging canvas which slapped against its chains with windy explosions, trying to shake off my ill-humor, until the cold cut of the spray which hissed over the decks brought back some equanimity.

IV

I WENT inside. The sofas in the ladies' saloon had been turned into beds. Most of the women had already put on their life preservers and were surrounded by impossible mounds of baggage. An old man was methodically deploying a pack of cards at a table. A woman, with a child on her shoulder, was staring open-eyed at the ceiling. Outside on the landing two returning sailors and a nursemaid were whispering with sudden outbursts of mirth, — Americans all, Yankee, Westerner, Scandinavian, Latin and Asiatic.

I went upstairs and into the foul thickness of the smoking room, where the shock of my entrance set the layers of gray fumes to twisting and coiling about the dim lamps. Groups had already formed at the corner tables; Hungerford and the younger men, a solemn audience about a chess match; another group near me — officers of two torpedoed freighters — were swapping yarns as they played.

"Got ours out of Genoa, just after dawn."

"Trouble getting away?"

"Shelled us right up to the last minute."

A little woman, wife of the speaker, broke into a light laugh.

"Kept on shellin', too, when we got the boats clear. Dan here, he says to me, 'Sarah, you stand right up and let 'em see there's a woman in the boat.' So I stood up, and crack, they let go with a shot that jumped the bonnet from my head. Polite, aren't they?"

"Don't tell that at home: they'll say you ex—aggerate!" said a large, swarthy man, who was shuffling the cards. "Civilized folks don't do such things; that's what they'll say!"

"Well, Sarah and I ain't got no kick coming," said the skipper philosophically. "We got away with six trips and landed the last cargo, too. Risky — but big money, and I guess we're on easy street for a while."

"Say, if this war goes on another year, boy, we'll have all the money in the world."

A short, stockily built young fellow, keen as a vulture, derby pushed back, removed a fat cigar and nodded to his neighbor, a type of world peddler, Armenian or Levantine, who was chewing a toothpick in a drowsy interest.

"All the money in the world! And after? Say — I've been over cleaning up *some* contracts, believe me; but that's nothin' to what's comin' — nothin'! Say — when this little war's over, any fellow who's got somethin' to sell is goin' to cash in so fast a crooked gamblin' wheel won't be in it."

"Oh, got a pretty good line, myself."

"You have, eh? What?"

"Antiques."

"Pretty soft bargains, eh?"

The Levantine smiled contentedly. And the two, suddenly attracted, moved into a corner, absorbed by their own bright conceptions of the future.

"Hello, there, Big Dale. Ship ahoy!"

I sauntered over curiously to where Hungerford was ensconced in the midst of congenial spirits.

"Have a hand?"

"No, thanks."

"Have a drink?"

"Not now."

I had sat through just such all-night sessions in the days when such feats were regarded as title to man's estate, but to-night the mood was foreign to my own.

"Shake hands with my old friend, 'Gyp, the Blood,' alias Frangipani," said Hungerford, whose good humor was proof against hunger, drowsiness, the cold gray dawn and stale tobacco. "Mr. Frangipani was *not* a professor of English at Columbia."

"How be you, friend? Seen you on the deck," said a stocky, square fellow in ambulance uniform, who gave me a drowsy squint from around a knobby nose and put out a squatty hand which was minus a finger. "Not drinkin'?"

"Thanks, no. The atmosphere is strong enough," I answered, wondering in what strange by-ways of civilization — tramp steamer, traveler of the underworld, or ranger of the Western prairies — the man had gone his careless journey.

"Mr. Tooker, of Tookerville, Mississippi, sah. Mr. Tooker is a close student of our great national game."

"Very glad to know you, Mr. Littledale," said a brisk little fellow, sober, well-groomed, soft-voiced, alert and smiling. "Heard a good deal about you."

"Mr. Galligan, of Walla Walla. Mr. Galligan is returning from his period of rest at the front to get a little

excitement in the Coeur d'Alene district," said Hungerford, who was in good spirits.

A powerful, big-framed youth, with bullet head, blue eyes and thin lips, who had been making desperate attempts at keeping his eyes open, yawned, and said thickly:

" 'Scuse me. Had a —— of a night in Bordeaux. Glad to know you."

"*And* Professor Ralph Waldo William Butler Swinburne Southwick, of Harvard, and Beacon Street, and the American Ambulance."

Southwick, in his precipitation to shake hands, dropped his glasses, which slid from his long, delving nose and dangled back and forth on their short string, overturned a pile of chips, and started to take up the discards, under a storm of protests.

"Other members of the original Inter-Allied Poker Club have succumbed to poison gas, auto-intoxication, and the need of a recumbent position," continued Hungerford, with a wave of his hand toward two figures on the couches, who had passed beyond the stage of introductions. He paused and indicated a large, bulbous figure under a sombrero, snoring peacefully in a sitting position at his side. "The late Mr. Honus Scroff, of Tittle Valley, Arizona. Mr. Scroff is especially delighted to meet you," he added, lifting the hat from the red, cropped hair and freckled ears.

"Honus hasn't been to bed since we started down," said Galligan, gathering in the cards.

"Quite right. Mr. Scroff's like an eight-day clock; he only has to sleep every Saturday night from 12 to 8."

"Play ball!" said Frangipani loudly, throwing in an ante.

Scroff woke, blinked, and said thickly, "My deal?"

"Not yet, old top!"

"All right."

And he went off to sleep again.

"I'm in," said the professor colloquially. "Shove around the pasteboards."

She did
And she didn't;
She would
And she wouldn't;
O-o-o-o-o! BUT — !

began Frangipani, in a long, doglike wail, which drew curses from the four corners of the room. The cards were dealt and the bets began.

I stood watching them quite a while, amused at their patter. They were real, as I had learned to value men in the rough-and-tumble of life. It was Young America relaxing, — the need of a young nation to return to its play, to blow off steam after months of driven dynamic energy. Quite barbaric at bottom, perhaps, — but so understandable, to me! I liked the democracy of the group and its unconscious camaraderie. Yet, I could not help thinking how unrelated we were to one another, — to the present or to the future. And, as I stood there studying them — in my mind the menace that Magnus had voiced — I wondered how long we could stem the moving forces below that had the solidarity and the energy of determined rebels.

To-night, as I recall this first conversation with Magnus, my irritation dies away. I am not sure but what he has but stated in his own antagonistic way things which have been growing over me.

Democracy was a revolt against the leadership of a class when that leadership had grown weak and was no longer natural and genuine. But, if democracy cannot

produce its own real leadership — if it can do no more than set in motion a mob — the leadership of that mob will be the leadership that surges out of the accidents of a stampede.

V

FOUR bells rang from the forecastle when I returned to my chair on the lower deck. Brinsmade and Magnus were breathing heavily. I enclosed my legs in the rug, burrowed my nose in my great coat, and sought sleep. Disturbed by the bustle of my arrival, the young woman at my side stirred in her sleep and moaned. The dream passed into a nightmare for, struggling suddenly against some grim horror of unreality, she burst into a cry:

"Ma mère! Ma mère, — oh non, pas ça!"

The scream awoke a score of passengers. Out of the darkness voices cried excitedly:

"What's happened?"

"Submarine?"

"Oh, my God!"

People began to rise and grope towards the cabins. I heard Brinsmade and Magnus struggling to their feet. Another moment, and a panic would have swept over us. I called out cheerily:

"Nothing wrong! Somebody's got a bad dream; nothing else!"

Then I leaned over and caught the arm of the dreamer. She groaned, shivered, and sat up.

"A nightmare, Mademoiselle," I said, loud enough to be heard down the deck. "All right now. Nothing wrong."

She was sitting bolt upright, straining against the horror of the passing phantom.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle, for having taken your arm — it seemed best — you were evidently —" I stopped lamely, a prey to the diffidence I had felt in her presence from the first approach.

She had not moved.

"I hope I did not offend you —"

"No, no," she said suddenly. "It was a dream — a terrible dream!"

Her voice was not yet under control. I waited, but having said this, she drew back into her silence. Presently, I heard her settling back into her chair. Quiet had returned to the deck. I sat there, keenly awake. The memory of her cry haunted me and, though the utter blackness prevented my seeing her, I had the feeling that she, too, was tremulously, nervously awake at my side.

Often have I wondered what makes us so blind to our own selves, and sometimes I think it is our insistence in seeing our lives as a logical development. We seek in all phases of life a working formula (formulas which are not knowledge but the substitute for knowledge) and we early adopt a formula about our own selves. We never see ourselves whole because, perhaps, we never complete our own image.

I know that I, too, am a slave to my own formula. I say to myself that I am an average man, — that, given a problem of action, I will do under given circumstances just what the average man will do; that, if I am better or worse, it is all in the quality of opportunity. I am influenced largely by the judgment my neighbors would pass on me — by a desire to maintain my own self-respect, or to return to it — and yet I am conscious of but a distant and imperfect acquaintance with this self which is my court of last judgment. And, when I have

said all this, I am conscious that I have explained nothing, — that there is always at the bottom of myself some unpremeditated, rebellious impulse that in the moments of most determined progress towards a given point suddenly sends me blindly in another direction. What is that invisible, intangible sense? I obey by instinct something that I do not comprehend. I follow myself through changing phases and wonder at the instinct that brings me back to the level of common sense — as a ship in a storm struggles to right itself. I am here as I am to-day by some agency that mystifies me, — invisible forces from without, or some instinct from within. Yet as I look back I see no logical relation in the process.

That night, half-awake, half-adream, four figures passed before me, conjured up from the cauldron of my imagination, as the mystic sequence which greeted Macbeth.

The First: A boy, with the eyes of faith, believing in the good of the world, a scrubby, tousled little urchin, in and out of mischief, just beginning to penetrate beyond the borders of fairyland, passionately curious; a rich little mind exploring vast continents of treasured knowledge; a youngster who had already dared climb the magic walls of childhood and hesitated before the jump into the strange real world. What was I then? All of creation was within my imagination; society was expressed in three laws, — the rising bell, soap, and the Sunday prohibitions. The first two I comprehended (in my male's instinct for order); the last I never did. What had happened to the world that periodically, at the end of each week, a sudden hush should fall in the household, that romping must cease and playthings be hidden away, and the body encased in starched shirts and shining black suits, and the young romping spirits should be led in leash

to hard benches and the pointing finger. Father and mother were majestic, Olympian figures, never quite understood; authority was absolute, and the world black or white. My first love, a young lady of twenty years, was an angel stepping down out of the parted heavens, whose voice thrilled to the secret caverns of my heart. She stopped but a week at our home and I have never seen her since, yet in those short days I fell so desperately in love with her — greatest and most radiant of fairy princesses — that to this day I can feel my little heart stop as over the bed-covers I saw her come to my bedside, all fragrance and loveliness, to touch my eyelids with her lips. And then, they told me that she was to be married; that she had gone and I would see her no more. I remembered the child quivering under his first touch of sorrow, poignant and overwhelming. That first knowledge of sorrow, the utter loneliness, the incomprehension that such things could exist in the simplicity of the world! There was no refuge but in dreams and for months I lived for my dream, — for that moment when the candle wick glowed and dropped into the darkness and the shimmering stars came through the open window, and my dreams would begin anew, as out of the peopled dark, ogres and kings' sons, Napoleons and presidents, Hercules and Ulysses, fairy godmothers and elves, and — always — the loveliest princess in the world came forth to fetch me into the fantasy of the future.

Sometimes now, thinking on that future, I wonder, should I have sons, if any of them will be as real to me as that boy. I think not. In the man, the first-born and the closest to his heart must ever be the boy that was. I see now that it was that first imagined sorrow which led me beyond the magic garden of childhood into the questioning of youth. There were nights, moonlit nights and starry nights, when I crept to my window and strove to pierce

the riddle of the strange things above; when I stood and wondered and shivered, a little mind striving to penetrate the sky, pitting itself against Infinity. And, as I watched this young self there in the still of the covered night, I wondered. Now, I seldom dream or question: I have retreated behind my formulas. But what became of all the brave little thoughts, the fancy, the rich curiosity and the eagerness for first knowledge? Which is the true, abiding self, — this, or the pebble fashioned by the grinding, restless forces of Society?

Second Figure: A young man of twenty, outwardly disciplined, walking, talking, dressing like ten thousand other well-groomed, mechanical products of the educational factories; inwardly, a turbulent appetite for life, a mind which had stopped functioning, an imagination buried, but with every impulse and curiosity vibrantly awake. Never have I been surer of myself, and never was I more worked upon by forces which I did not understand; I, a high-strung young animal suddenly released into the pastures of youth. Everything appealed to me; every broad way and byway in the vast forest of life sent me galloping down it in exploration. Each impulse, good or evil, was genuine and irresistible. I adored one woman as a saint, blushed and stumbled in her presence, trembled at the contact of her fingers and, in the full flush of this puppy-love, could feel my blood surge at a brazen glance. I drank too much, gambled outrageously: yet it was not from any desire for ugliness, but from the sheer joy of wrestling with invisible outer forces, in a strange belief that I, a privileged being, could affront the gods of chance and bind them to my way. I dissipated a month's allowance in a day; fell into deep periods of religious speculation; rebelled at dogma and constituted authority; rejected all that was old and

followed everything that was new. All this I did as hungrily as I sat down at table, without knowing in the slightest why I did it. Yet this is not quite true. Already, I had begun to be conscious of a dual self, a self that acted and a self that watched. Often, I went madly towards an infatuation which would have meant the end of all things, knowing all the time the fatality of it, powerless to resist and saved only by some trick of circumstance. The truth was that my blood ran too rapidly in my veins, the delight in every sense was too imperious, the joy of being alive too intoxicating.

Still, in this period when everything was fermenting, fructifying, bubbling to the surface in me, my outlook was of the simplest. Black was still black, and white, white. Women were good or bad, — and both drew me to them. I broke the laws of society, but I believed in them, fully determined at some calmer, wiser period of my life to maintain and defend them. So, when I was most inconsistent, I had faith in inconsistency. I repented with the same ardor with which I transgressed.

I walked down the avenue, and my imagination took fire at the brilliant women in their speeding luxury. What did I feel? The need of exerting the supremacy of my youth over their shallow, sparkling little souls. I sat in a great Opera House and, before that insistent, imperious parade of society, dreamed of some future date when I who was now lost in the crowd would impose myself. Everything in me was force, faith, and desire, and all these young impulses tugged at my soul for the opportunity to express themselves. How confident, how wise, how convinced I was, and — I knew nothing. For, mentally, it was a period of arrested development, when I mistook hunger for strength, vanity for power, longing for capacity.

We are all, I suppose, more or less cases of arrested development. When a man ceases to inquire, to explore, and to wonder, when he is convinced of his knowledge, when he reaches the point where all his free and flexible opinions have settled into hardened convictions, at that moment his development is stopped, even as a little child whose mind cannot move beyond the A. B. C.

This was what I was in the days when all within me was but an appetite for life. What shook my equanimity and violently freed me of my self-complacency? The first contact with evil, the knowledge and the mysterious reaction.

Third Figure: A man approaching thirty, perhaps too near to be seen distinctly, and yet in such violent contrast that before its note of worldly knowledge boyhood and youth fled from the contact. I saw a man whose eyes had gone behind every scene, whose back had turned, he believed, on every illusion, tolerant of every frailty, amused at little hypocrisies and of those greater shams which an arrogant society imposes on the outsider and itself defies with impunity: steeped in this class cynicism, without realizing that in the strong nourishing forces of civilization this society is but the scum that rises to the surface and that in the old *pot-au-feu* below are the vital nourishments of the race. I had come eagerly into the brilliant cosmopolitan society of Europe with enough money and proper credentials, and I had come as how many young men of imagination and fire before me, believing in pleasure as the goal of life, pleasure, which I had seen in my ardent nature as in youth one sees and believes in the painted beauties and the paste jewels behind footlights. I recoiled, I grew accustomed to what I at first resented. I shrugged my

shoulders, and, in the end, I did as those I lived with did. In the unconscious progression is the whole story. I became a *flâneur* of society. I knew the comedies and tragedies of a ballroom as an old collector on the *quais* recognizes and smiles over the titles whose stories he knows. I lived a life of crowded inconsequences. The days and nights were consumed in doing — what to-day is a blank of years. But how my world had narrowed! The limitless horizons and starry spaces of childhood, even the mysterious depths of youth, had contracted into confines so narrow that my daily run of life was more provincial than that of a buried village. Why did I not go on in the paths of worldly wisdom, with a cynical weighing of actual values? Why did I not continue steadfast, as my logic showed me? The truth lay, perhaps, in the heart of a child that we men can never quite kill. The first impulse is the abiding impulse; if you would know the man, know the child.

It was in vain I told myself that only the living was vital, and that in a world of sceptics and pagans only the fools cling to compunctions. I repeated to myself that the sum of all moralities is in the instinct of the man to believe what he wants to believe. It brought me no calm. I did wrong, saying to myself that it was not wrong, and yet all the time I knew in my restlessness that it was wrong. Madame de Tinquerville instilled into my veins this mental corruption and yet, at the end, when I believed that I had accepted everything, a nausea seized me and I flung this self violently aside. Then the mobilization, and a new self.

Fourth Figure: I, myself, — if not the self of to-morrow, the self of to-day: an exile. For I had been that all these long embittered months, — an exile from all that life had been to me, a man grown suddenly taciturn, who

smoked his pipe, lying in a mud hole behind a flap, and gazed up at the thin blue avenue of the trenches overhead; smoked, obeyed, questioned not, and was content to have found a meaning. Atavism, perhaps, the content to be just man again, following man's instinct to survive among the fittest. I knew life as though I had been born to it again. Three times a day I thrilled with the delight of eating; I knew the ecstasy of sleep after fatigue; I wept at the loss of a comrade, and my whole heart rejoiced when in the exhaustion after battle with my closing vision I felt the rough hands of a convict drawing his coat over me with the tenderness of a woman. The world had no perplexities for me. The mask was discarded. I felt myself brute, Crusader, sinner, pagan and saint, and each mood was genuine. I saw men in the frenzy of combat swept into moments of unbelievable ferocity. I myself knew moments when there was nothing human in me, when courage was but the panic for existence. And out of the abnormal slaying self I would grope back into the man that reasoned over his actions and shivered at the animal that had run wild. I knew the pagan hour that comes so easily to those who have felt the breath of passing destruction continuously at their side. In the whirlpool and the whipping trenches I have seen my comrade at arms struck and strewn into unrecognizable matter and have felt but one instinctive thought:

"I live — I still live!"

Yet, later, in a more reasoning mood, deliberately and calmly, I have gone back as others went, into the certainty of destruction, to rescue a wounded stranger. I have returned with the living, singing, greedy of life, — a bed of hay paradise and a can of *Pinard* the ecstasy of forgetfulness. I have rebelled, hesitated, been caught with the cold nausea of fear, thrilled at a word from a peasant boy kneeling and crossing himself, and awakened

to the call of leadership which was mine by *noblesse oblige,* become suddenly and disdainfully impersonal when responsibility had fallen to me and I could do no less than the least. Other moments there were, when I walked, a lone sentry in the night, among the sleeping and the dead, when a feeling of reverence and awe possessed my soul at the slow revolving stars, and I wondered at the futility of victors and vanquished under the things that change not. I knew moments of intense intellectual clarity when my mind seemed to take wing and lift me above the soiled reality of conflict into a mystic sense of my own loneliness in the scheme of things. At such moments, when only the questioning remained, I had a disdain of danger and of the death which went unseen and whining in the night, — a disdain that was absolute. Yet in the morning, cramped in a dugout, I heard above me the great shells shatter and felt the cold sweat rise in my back. After this can the other life be real? I wonder. Or will all this pass into a dim incredible memory?

And so, through the long night, there on the hidden deck among those who waited and feared, next to the woman at my side, awake, too, with her memories, I saw my strange selves pass and wondered. Which was the nearest kin to the David of that hour? What new figure would come out of the future that was as impenetrable as the dark that wrapped me about?

VI

I THINK I must have gone off into a half-sleep, for all at once my eyes opened to gray and wavering shapes.

The skeleton outline of the creaking ship grew out of the fluid dawn, figures of sleeping passengers rose out of the obscurity and across the rail glimmered the white curl of the clearing sea. My first instinctive impulse was to the woman at my side.

The veil had been thrown back; the long lashes lay on the brown cheek across which clung a spray of dark hair. The front of the rough Breton hood half concealed the clear rise of the forehead and soaring eyebrows, the fine delicacy of the high-bridged nose, the full and sensitive lips. One hand lay at her throat, a rosary entwined in her fingers and the silver flash of a crucifix. I thought then that I had never looked upon anything so gentle, so fragile, so pure. She was so far removed from the things of this heavy world that in her semi-recumbent position, I thought of some sculptured saint, asleep in an olden monastery.

Her eyes opened, rested in mine a full moment, read my thoughts, and dropped away. Instantly, she drew her veil, sat up, and averted her head. Within me everything grew troubled and confused. I rose hastily and went down the deck.

I can remember to this day the sudden timidity that overcame me always in her presence, the eagerness to speak to her, and the hesitancy whenever I found an excuse. In her, too, I see now, two impulses fought, for at times, in her instinct to repel me, she was brusque almost to the point of rudeness and her manner so determinedly antagonistic that I grew diffident as a boy. What had become of the man of the world? I, who prided myself on my knowledge of women, was as awkward in her presence, as helpless and at loss as the veriest schoolboy. I can remember that I had but one thought on awakening, — to do her some service. Yet when I had returned from below-decks with a thermos bottle of

hot coffee I was utterly nonplussed for some pretext to approach her.

I came hesitantly down the strewn deck. The sky was graying rapidly now, as the dawn crept in chill and sickly. Astern, the low-huddled funnels of our escort, — guardian of our night. Brinsmade and Magnus had wakened and gone below. The lady with the child was sitting up, rearranging her veil. A sudden inspiration came to me. I stopped and made my offer.

"A drop of hot coffee, Madame?"

She took it, smiling and grateful, refusing a second cup. I breathed more freely, for I felt I had removed all personal emphasis. I passed on.

"Won't you also, Mademoiselle, have a bit of coffee? It's a long way to breakfast."

Yet, as I said this, I had a sudden weak feeling of intruding, and I looked away from her for fear she would read beneath the studied impersonality of my tone. Behind the veil, I felt a moment of hesitation.

"If you will hold the bottle, I will get some clean glasses."

When I returned, I brought a box of crackers, taking the precaution to offer them along the way. This action evidently disarmed her prejudices, for she had drawn her veil when I came to her chair. I poured a full glass.

"But you, Monsieur?"

"Oh, I've had my cup, below. Take it — you need it. I'm afraid you had a bad night."

She took the glass but made no answer. When I referred to the night, her gray-eyed glance rose to my face, rested a furtive moment in thoughtful inquiry, and retreated; but the moment was not one of embarrassment or hesitation, but rather of a settled attitude of aloofness.

"There is just a little more."

"Some one else, then."

I poured out what remained and handed it to her, pressing her acceptance.

"Thank you — no more."

She drew on her glove, lowered her veil, and sank back once more.

Feeling a certain irritation that in this first clash of authority she should have resisted, I sat down.

"To-morrow morning I'll be better provided."

"To-morrow? We spend another night on deck?" she said, in surprise.

"That's orders. But you don't obey orders," I said, glancing at the deck. "Orders are to bring your life belt, and you've not done it."

"No — I didn't think of it."

"You are not afraid?"

"Afraid? Of that?" she said slowly. She shook her head and I wondered at the look behind her veil.

The tone in which it was said, coupled with the memory of that meeting on the upper deck, thrilled me. I sought to make her talk, to establish a natural acquaintance, through no forward curiosity but out of a genuine sympathy. Yet I was so keenly aware of the bar which her traditions interposed that I waited a long moment before I had courage to say:

"Mademoiselle, I hope you will forgive my presumption of last night."

"Presumption?"

"Yes, it was that. I hope you did not misunderstand my action."

She turned.

"I did not misunderstand that, no," she said reluctantly, for I was forcing her into a conversation against her will, "and yet, why should you have done it?"

"Mademoiselle," I said, surprised at the quickening of my pulses, "I have done what little I could to help,

because I love your people. I have lived among sorrow and terror. Am I not allowed to understand, and try to help, just — because it is one of my own kind?"

She did not reply at once. I felt that her eyes were on me.

"You Americans have kind hearts, Monsieur, and I thank you again."

To this day I can remember the thrill of pleasure that came to me with the first softening of her voice, that first note which told me that in her eyes I was no longer just one of the passing crowd.

"I know how a young girl is brought up in France," I began hurriedly —

"We are no young girls now, Monsieur. There are only women in France."

The voice was back into the measured, impersonal tone.

I looked at her, amazed, started to speak and stopped. I understood that I should gain nothing by forcing a conversation, and though every instinct urged me to remain near her, I rose to withdraw.

"May I present myself, Mademoiselle, since we are to be companions for a while? I am Mr. David Littledale."

She bowed in acknowledgment but made no answer, and I went down the deck with a stirring uneasiness at the awkwardness which it seemed to me I had displayed in every word and action. Later in the day I found a card on her chair. The name was like herself, a veil thrown up against my curiosity.

"Mademoiselle Renée Duvernoy."

VII

An ocean steamer is a great university of the world. Infinity of sea and sky bring an incredulity of the defined land, where strange human beings move under precise conventions to the tyranny of what is or is not done. For me the comprehensible world was but this speck of wood, swinging between water and sky. The salt democracy of the sea and the common sense of danger run quickened our senses and let down the barriers of our Anglo-Saxon restraint.

Yet of all those who crowded the decks the one woman who interested me most defied all my attempts at friendship. Beyond the unconventionality of our first meetings on the dock and by the upper rail I had been unable to progress. Indeed, all her attitude indicated a studied resolve to retreat from the memory of that accidental intimacy. Her greeting each morning was gracious. She allowed me to arrange her pillows and wrap her solicitously in her steamer rugs.

"Monsieur, I thank you; you are very kind."

She said it gravely, with a slight acknowledgment of her head, but her tone remained impersonal and she conveyed to me, without possibility of misunderstanding, that her privacy was to be respected, and it was not until I had gone off for a tramp of the decks or had turned into the constant discussion which ran on between Magnus and Brinsmade that she drew her veil and picked up her book. The book was but a pretext. For hours she held it before her without the turning of a page.

At times, I pretended to go off into long siestas, studying her furtively in short examinations. For despite every precaution, if my glance remained on her too long, she

became aware of it and, if I persisted, she retired behind her veil.

This very reserve stirred my curiosity. My imagination was drawn to the mystery I divined of some inner conflict beneath the precise formality of her outer manner. Her slightest action became to me the important record of my day. I studied her and wondered. There were hollows in her cheek that should not have gone with her years. Often in the warm, impulsive lips I detected the set droop of long fatigue, while about the eyes, which remained long moments lost in the healing distance, I felt the still quivering lines of remembered pain. She seemed so out of place that, with the memory of my own exile, I felt intuitively the struggle of a soul brutally torn from its protecting affections and forced by the tragic hazards of war to struggle for readjustment and the right to go on living. I felt this and yet I could not intrude. About her, in everything she did, in every word she uttered, was an authority I could not but respect.

Her day was measured in an unvarying routine. She came from breakfast, walked alone for an hour, took to her chair and read, with long periods of abstracted contemplation, until a glance at her watch apprised her of the time for another turn of the deck.

When she walked, it was without movement of the hips or shoulders, her elbows to her sides, with a curious erect and measured grace, as our grandmothers used to walk, — when our grandmothers were straight and slender. Her step was light and leisurely, without purpose. She paused often, leaning against the rail, to gaze into the western distances, before resuming her pensive strolling. In the afternoon, particularly at the stealing in of the dusk, I saw her turn to her prayer-book. Then she became so absorbed that she forgot my presence completely, lifted into regions where I could not follow.

The method, the dryness, the precision of this routine would have convinced me were it not for a memory, — the cry of the woman in her loneliness on the upper deck. With that memory in mind, I felt from the first the struggle and the conflict, — two natures contending within her; or rather that, with some determined resolve before her, as a novice about to renounce the world, she was striving to impose upon herself a discipline, mental and moral, which was not in the ardent and impulsive rebellion of her temperament.

The short word of greeting, the punctilious farewell at night, in a manner grave, restrained, and without a smile, were all so carefully adjusted to the most obvious civilities that I despaired of ever penetrating her reserve. Yet when the opportunity came it came as naturally as it was unexpected.

Among the few children was a boy of five or six who enjoyed great popularity among the passengers. The child, attracted to Mademoiselle Duvernoy by childhood's instinct to those who have borne pain, passed and repassed a dozen times a day before her chair, seeking by every artifice to catch her eye.

The fourth morning out, when we were stretched languidly in our steamer chairs, Master Jack, enveloped in leggings, sweater and muffler, wabbled down like a rolling ball of cotton and, after the usual preliminary skirmishes, rallying his courage, stopped directly between our chairs and said timidly:

"How do?"

The piping voice startled her from her mechanical contemplation. She dropped her book and her body seemed to shrink back.

"I talk to you a little while — yes?"

The smile of the young suppliant would have won over

a jury, yet to my surprise she did not unbend and the greeting was forced and perfunctory.

"Good-morning."

Determined, the youngster sidled up and stood gazing in adoration.

"Why you wear that ugly veil all the time?"

As he asked the question, the childish fingers fastened and turned about her wrist, while the young eyes grew big with sympathy. I saw her arm draw hastily back from the contact. Then, after a moment, as though obeying a superior determination, it came forward slowly and reluctantly.

"The veil is not ugly."

The tone, the action, the undefined look with which she stared at him, impressed the child. A serious expression came over his face, — a look of trying to understand something beyond his ken.

"Is it because you are so very sad?" he said softly.

I felt her panic before the child's innocent directness and that in her helplessness she turned to me.

"Come here, Jack the Giant Killer," I said, catching him up and swinging him through the air to plant him firmly on my lap. "How old are you? Where are you going? What makes the steam white, the water wet, and why does the wind sing? Do you know all that?"

"Why is the water wet?" said the youngster.

"You don't know? Goodness — neither do I!"

The child, with his eyes still on Mademoiselle Duvernoy, extended a pudgy forefinger.

"Is she your sister?"

"No, young man: and Mademoiselle Duvernoy is not my daughter, nor my cousin, aunt or wife," I said hastily, with a fear of coming questions. "And if you will promise, solemnly promise, not to ask another question, I'll tell you the story of 'Puss-in-Boots'."

"I know 'Puss-in-Boots'!"

"Well, 'Cinderella and the Glass Slipper'."

"I know 'Cinderella'."

"Well, what don't you know?"

"I like the story of the Bears," said the youngster decidedly.

"Humph! Now, that is funny," I said, to gain time, for my memory was not of the clearest. To save the situation, I decided to improvise. "That is funny, because, —do you know, that reminds me of myself and my brothers. What do you think they called us? 'Big Dale, Little Dale, Weeny Dale, and No Dale at All'!"

"You look like a bear," said the youngster gravely.

"So they say. Well, once upon a time there was a little girl, — a very little girl, with the most wonderful golden hair in the world. She was called — "

"Snow-white!"

"Not at all. Golden-Locks. Well, one day, Golden-Locks went out walking in the woods, and she saw the most wonderful butterfly in the world, with diamonds glittering on its wings. She went on and on, following the diamond butterfly, until all at once she came to a little river that was flowing milk; but that wasn't the strangest thing — "

"No?" said Master Jack, with round eyes.

"No. On the opposite side was a house, — all made of gingerbread; but that wasn't the strangest thing."

"No?"

"No. She went inside, and there, on the table, were five white plates."

But here Master Jack sat up in protest.

"How could there be five plates, when there is only three Bears?"

"Three? Who said there were only three Bears? There were five Bears in the story."

"Three!"

"Five. The story of the Five Bears. Don't I know?"

"Wasn't there only three Bears?" said Master Jack, who had caught the now amused glance of Mademoiselle Duvernoy.

"Three — yes."

"There — you see!" exclaimed the youngster. "And — and wasn't she called Snow-White?"

"She was."

"There!"

"Then they're not the same Bears," said I, in pretended wrath. "My Bears are American Bears. There was Father Growler and Mother Gruff — that makes two — and Grumble Bear and Guzzle Bear — and that makes four — and then there was Tinkle Bear — "

"That makes five!"

"I resign," I said, with tremendous dignity. "Tell it your own way."

But instead of protests and capitulation, the critic stood to his colors.

"You don't tell it at all the right way," said the prejudiced public in the person of Master Jack. "You put in things that don't belong. You tell it?" he said, suddenly turning to Mademoiselle Duvernoy, who had been smiling at my perplexity.

"Oh, but Mr. Littledale tells it very well."

"You tell it yourself, and I'll correct you," I said, laughing.

The issue was settled by Master Jack who, with a sudden wriggle, transferred himself to the other chair. I rose to reclaim the truant, who had snuggled up to her shoulder, but she shook her head.

"No, no, he can stay."

Her arms closed about the fluffy rascal, and she began.

"Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Snow-

White, who lived with her father, a wood-chopper, in the woods — "

The youngster nodded, satisfied, glancing at me from time to time with malicious triumph as the narration ran along classic lines. Her voice was low, warmed with tenderness, and with the serio-comic pantomime of the story there came into her face a new light, all gentleness. I bent forward, listening to the melody of the voice without attention to the narrative, my eyes fixed on the mobile, fugitive expressions of her face. Why had she resisted the child at first, — shrinking from his touch? And, why this sudden melting?

"And the enchanted Prince came out and married Snow-White, and they lived happily, ever and ever after!"

But only half of the audience heard her. Master Jack was fast asleep.

"I thought I made up a very good story," I said hurriedly, fearing the opportunity would pass.

"You see, fairy stories are better each time they are told over — and that's why they must always be kept the same."

We lowered our voices.

"I thought for a moment you —" I caught myself. "I beg your pardon; I was going to ask you a personal question, and I know you don't like that."

"You thought I disliked children, didn't you?" she asked.

"Why, yes — "

"It was not that. Memories —" She checked herself, frowning.

"Of course. I understand," I said hurriedly, as I saw the old expression of sadness cloud her face. "I am sorry. Don't you want me to take the youngster? He is rather heavy."

"No, no, please."

I felt opportunity slipping from me.

"Mademoiselle Duvernoy, it must seem strange to you, a French girl, brought up as you were, to realize this freedom of the sea?"

She turned to me in astonishment.

"What do you know about the way I have been brought up, Monsieur?" The tone was a return to the old formality. Yet her eyes, in the brief second they met mine, had a certain fugitive alarm.

"I have lived in France. I know the ways of your people, and I have been privileged to know many of your old families. I am certain we have acquaintances in common, of the Faubourg St. Germain; and I know how rigidly the daughters are brought up."

She frowned and shook her head decisively.

"You are quite mistaken about me. I have come to America to earn my own living."

The tone in which she said it was imperative, set and admitting no debate.

"If you are a Frenchwoman, coming to my country, in whatever way, I hope I may be honored by your friendship."

"But, Monsieur," she retorted, in a gentler tone, "I don't see how you and I can touch at any point; our ways are entirely different; and my traditions do not permit me to make chance acquaintanceships. Pardon me for saying this frankly to you, but it is a question of pride."

I felt the door had been firmly closed in my face. Why such a rebuff, when every instinct in me had been but of kindness? I was hurt, and my manner showed it. I turned stiffly, and, sinking back in my chair, returned to my book. Master Jack woke up and departed in search of a tray of cookies.

"Mr. Littledale, — please?"

I looked up so hastily that the book slipped from my hands and tumbled to the deck.

"I did not mean anything to offend you. You won't be offended, will you?"

"Why, just for a moment, I wasn't quite sure — " Such a clear feeling of joy rose in me, after the blank discouragement of a moment before, that I cried out:

"Good heavens, no; of course, I won't!"

She looked at me a little shyly and then away, hesitating, and I feared I had frightened her away again with my tactless impulsiveness. However, after a moment, she turned to me.

"You were in the Legion, Monsieur?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

"Long?"

"I went in with the mobilization."

"May I ask why you, an American, did that?"

"I could not help myself. It was so much bigger than anything else that had come into my life."

She thought this over a moment and then nodded as though pleased.

"Ah, yes — the mobilization. It made us very proud of our old French race."

"It made me proud of my fellow beings!"

"You — an American — felt that?"

"Particularly because I was an American," I found myself saying, with great warmth. "Oh, I do not sentimentalize war. I have lived it."

"You do not see it as only brutalizing, as that book 'Gaspard,' of which we are so much ashamed?"

"No, if that were the only side, France would not be living to-day."

"Thank you, Monsieur," she said, in sudden friendliness.

"The truth is in neither point of view. We cannot say that war ennobles or brutalizes mankind. I have thought about this much, and this is what I think: the man who is fundamentally a brute is made more brutal; the man who has in him a spark of nobility, even unsuspected, is lifted up. What war does is to search our souls and discover the ultimate truth. You see, in times of peace, we all more or less wear a mask for our neighbors. Well, when you've once gone into the trenches, that all disappears: you find out what you believe. When all may be over at any moment, you do what you want to do. And the strange thing is that each respects the other's point of view."

"I think there is one thing you have left out," she said, after a moment's thought.

"What is that?"

"The question of leadership. When he who leads is simple and high of heart, the *poilu* always responds."

"Yes, that is true, absolutely true."

"War is a time when the leader is everything, isn't it?" She thought a moment, and added, with a little weariness in her voice: "That is why I think, no matter what the hideous suffering that comes, it does set us right and turn us from false leaders."

At this moment Hungerford came up and, much to my chagrin, I was forced to present him, cutting short our first conversation.

VIII

HER behavior with Hungerford puzzled me. There was not a trace of the calculated reserve which dominated all our meetings and to which, if for a moment

she forgot herself, she inevitably returned. A little jealousy sprang up in me, for I was quite blind then to the real reason. I felt that in me there was some lack of spontaneous appeal to a woman. Before the irresistible good spirits of the younger man I felt a heaviness of experience and wondered why in all my attempts at friendship I should be so constantly saying the things that sent her into the shell of her reserve, when she would listen with her grave smile to Joe's amusing patter. I was blind, indeed, and though I took pains to hide it, I was weakly hurt at this unconscious camaraderie with another.

She consented to our accompanying her in her walks when Joe assumed it as a matter of course, though she did refuse, and I remember it with a secret delight, to permit him the privilege alone. Here again her personality dominated us. When Hungerford, with the free and easy catch-as-catch-can manner of the younger generation, started to assume possession of her arm, she disengaged herself quietly, and said:

"Messieurs, if you will offer me *your* arms."

Any one but Hungerford would have been discountenanced. As it was, though he was a bit flustered, he gave her an exaggerated sweep of his hat.

"Style Louis XIV, Marquise!"

And, with her hands resting lightly on our arms, we adapted our impulsive strides to the leisurely grace of her choosing. Whatever her reason for assuming the name and position she did (I had never believed in it from the first), it was by such little things as this that she betrayed the quality of her breeding. Brinsmade and Peter Magnus were drawn to her instinctively, and often in the long afternoons we formed a circle of animated discussion. The opportunities to talk to her alone were rare and always she avoided them. When I did find a moment's intimacy it was always to be made aware of

the ever present sadness back of her eyes and the weight of some oppressing memory.

The afternoon after her first introduction to Hungerford, a curious incident happened, which, to this day, remains inexplicable to me. For neither of us ever after referred to it.

We were walking the upper deck, under the open sky, the crisp tingling air setting our cheeks to glowing. Despite herself, she was smiling at Hungerford's whimsical instructions on American society, while I, feeling a little out of it, walked silently at her side, wondering at the ease with which Joe had plunged into her acquaintance.

"And remember, in America, a young lady of fashion, who is properly brought up, never marries until she has had a dozen proposals."

"Never?"

"Never. It isn't done. Oh, American girls are brought up to take care of themselves! When she is bored, do you think she waits for the men to come round? Not at all: she goes to the 'phone and says: 'Jack, come up and take me out to dinner and a show; I want to be amused'."

"And she pays the bill?" said Mademoiselle Duvernoy innocently.

"The what?"

"The bill."

"Mademoiselle — I am living in hopes — "

At this moment a gust of wind caught a large woman and bore her down the deck, screaming for help. Hungerford dashed ahead, while we, sheltering ourselves in the lee of a lifeboat, stood laughing at the difficulties of the rescue. A sailor passed us and then a boy, carrying a pot of grease, slipped, and, to save himself, caught at my arm. When I had righted him, I saw such an expres-

sion of astonishment on his face as he gazed at Mademoiselle Duvernoy that I said, still laughing:

"I say, this young fellow seems to know you."

"Eh, Bonne Dame; que c'est notre Mamzelle!"

She turned, and her face went blank: then, recovering herself, she said something rapidly in the Breton dialect which I could not understand. The effect was instantaneous. The boy drew up straight, snatched off his cap, and with marks of great respect backed away.

"Take my arm," I said, going to her instantly.

She made no resistance and once as we started she swayed against my side. We crossed the deck and I found her a seat where she was sheltered from sight. There was no mistaking the effect on her. The lips were twitching, and the lines under her staring eyes were quivering with a haunting pain.

"Don't try to speak. Don't worry. No one saw you — not even I. Do you understand?"

"Monsieur — " She tried to speak and then put her hand to her throat.

"Don't try to explain. Believe me, it isn't necessary."

She looked up at me, weak and shaken, and for the first time that I remembered her eyes held mine in a long, searching, mute appeal.

"But you will think — "

"Let me be your friend that far, Mademoiselle," I said impulsively. "Trust me. I have forgotten."

Hungerford swung around the deck and stopped short.

"Hello. What's wrong?"

"Too much motion, you unfeeling brute, or perhaps the sight of your gyrations."

I sent him for a chair and rugs, which gave her time to regain her self-control. Then I tucked her away in a sheltered corner, without opposition. She was stunned and did not seem to notice my presence for the long hour

during which I religiously kept my eyes from her face, turning my back and staring over the driven waves. Later she called to me in a voice still weak and I helped her to the lower deck. The incident remained in my memory, obsessing it, deepening the film of mystery which had been about her from the first.

IX

I THINK the thing that impelled me irresistibly to Mademoiselle Duvernoy was the directness and order of her character. I knew that as she was, she had always been, and that no future temptation could ever alter for a moment her clear perception of her own high ideals. In fact, I could not conceive of any such thing as temptation even entering her life. To me, in my own consciousness of my turbulent, shifting existence and my distrust of to-morrow, it brought me a sense of cathedral calm to be privileged to sit at her side and listen. I had not the slightest thought what was awakening in me, so simple, so natural and so unpremeditated was my impulse towards her. Gradually, a sense of well-being and light-heartedness came to me, for now, while I was still aware of her struggling against me, I was also aware of her yielding. With each morning's greeting I felt the night's determination to relegate me into the safe distance of the crowd. Yet I had but to conquer the disappointment of her first manner and possess my soul in patience, to have her turn to me in a new friendliness. At first I talked, and she listened, gravely and attentively. I spoke of impersonal things, of memories of trenches and hospital, of my intellectual unrest and philosophic specu-

lations. She answered me shortly, or by a question led me to find my own solution, but it was not until we were three days from port that she revealed her own thoughts and Peter Magnus was the occasion. I had been speaking of my reluctance to return home and my fear of the indifference to war I should find.

"You are never very tolerant, are you?" she said pensively.

"No, I suppose not," I said, rather surprised at her reading my character. "And yet you who are French surely must understand the longing I have to love my own country."

"My country has been centuries in the making. Our memories are long. In every family some one has died that France might remain France. We are an old race. We have lived together, been proud together, suffered together, a long while. That does not come in a day."

"No, of course not."

I must have shown in my sudden abstraction something of the indecision in my mind for, to my surprise, a note of friendly sympathy came into her voice.

"Mr. Littledale, I am afraid you are going to be unhappy, just at first. You hope for too much. Don't be impatient. How can your people know what we know? You will learn, as we learned, to stand together — by suffering."

At this moment, the voice of Peter Magnus broke in on our new mood.

"Then, you are glorifying war; you've come to that. Admit it."

Brinsmade rose from his rugs and stood before us with an expression of utter helplessness.

"Here is a man who has been three months in France and brings back nothing but war is horrible. What am I to do with him?"

Peter Magnus ensconced himself in Brinsmade's chair, so that we formed a group. He took off his hat and ran his hands through his hair, which was like a mane.

"When you speak of the glory of war," he said, addressing Mademoiselle Duvernoy directly, "I see only the women in black, the cripples, the men who will grope in blindness, the station filled with the agony of parting, the homes swept by sorrow. Glory! Where is the glory in it, if you do not wear a crown? No, no, war is horrible, unthinkable!"

"Yet war is as inevitable a condition to a nation as death is to a human being," she said quietly. "And is death so horrible?"

We three, of differing degrees of agnosticism, looked at her, struck with the boldness of the thought. It was Magnus who broke out:

"Yes, horrible! Death is horrible!"

"That, Monsieur, is because you have not seen how men die: you are frightened by the mystery of the thing you do not know. And — perhaps, in a man like you, you see only your own death — do you not?"

Magnus stared at her. From the first he had been strongly attracted to her and never failed in deference.

"What can you know of such a thing?" he asked incredulously.

"Men have died by the hundreds about me."

"You?"

She nodded.

"You have nursed in the Red Cross?"

"Yes. I do not like to speak of myself. I only mention it because we are discussing things seriously. Yes, I have seen men die by the hundreds. Monsieur Magnus, I have listened to many things you have said, and I wish to tell you where you are wrong, and where all your doc-

trines will fall down. All you think of is to avoid suffering."

"Yes, not only the suffering that comes from needless sacrifice, but the unending suffering that comes from those who must go on living. You know one thing. I know the great mass; the suffering of those who starve and suffocate."

"You speak of the individual. I speak of the bigger thing, — the race." A little color came into her face as she grew animated with her theme. "If a million men die to-day or to-morrow, what difference does that make to the nation, any more than the death of a single sparrow?"

"I can hardly believe it is you that says such a thing!" he said, astounded.

"Perhaps you don't understand me. It is not how a million men die but how they live that is important."

"You are arguing with an individualist," said Brinsmade.

"The right to live your life as you wish is to me a far more important thing than whether half the world shall speak English or German," said Magnus warmly. "I am looking from the bottom up. I know what they think who are striving, — not how best to enjoy life, but how to live. I know what the workers feel about such things."

"If that is true in America," she said, seeking to moderate the antagonism which his views aroused in her, "it is because the peasants and the workers who have emigrated are — how do you say? — *déracinés;* they have been uprooted; they have not yet fastened to your land; they do not love it more than they do themselves. What you say is not true of our French people. If you had seen our mobilization, you would have understood what it is, — the love of country."

"I saw it in the city," I said, breaking in, "and it is a memory I shall never forget."

"But you should have seen it in the country! The quietness and the stillness of it all — only the tocsin ringing in the church towers, ringing all the afternoon. I saw it. I saw the women running to join the men in the fields; to be together, the first thought. And I can see the men leaving their reaping, sending back the women to make ready their uniforms while they went, silently — always silently — to register at the *mairies*. And when they went off, that night, each woman brought down something from the store of the stockings, — a hundred, two hundred francs. Not a woman rebelled. They put out flower pots on the window sills and garlands of flowers on the great locomotives; and I myself saw a little child writing in chalk on the cars, 'J'aime la France!' There have been other moments — moments of doubt and weakness — but it is good to have seen that!" She stopped, a little embarrassed at having been carried away by her own enthusiasm. Then, she said more quietly: "That is how the people of France, the people you speak of, felt."

Magnus was silent a moment.

"It is hard to answer you, Mademoiselle," he said, gently. "I grant you that it is beautiful, but I maintain that the tragic thing is that it is all so unnecessary."

"No, no, it is not unnecessary. I say that France is finer, nobler now than it was before. Sacrifice is the essence of life. Suffering is the test of the finest in us. Why won't you admit that? Is it because you don't believe in anything else?"

"No," he said. "I cannot believe."

"Yes, that is at the bottom of much of your Socialism and your internationalism and your individualism. It is the selfish conception of mankind. There, Mr. Magnus, there, we disagree. We are not afraid of death."

"The Socialists and Freethinkers fought bravely, Mademoiselle," he said quietly, flushing under the antagonism he felt in her voice.

"True," she said, checked for a moment, "but one is not truly agnostic when one's mother has had faith. It is not a question of bravery, though. That is not quite fair," she admitted. "Yet, I am sure I am right. If there is no religious belief, you cannot have faith also for your nation, can you, Mr. Brinsmade?"

"I had not thought of it in your way," he said slowly. "I am inclined to believe you are right."

"I am. A Frenchman may have ceased to believe, but he can't get away from what has been taught him back through his generations of ancestors. For we have taught him duty, not as something he rebels against, but as an ideal, something so beautiful that he is willing to sacrifice himself to that. Also, that is why we are a great nation; because our young men are brought up to think of France as something outside of themselves, that must go on, that must live, — an ideal that is not selfish. That is what we all feel, Messieurs, from top to bottom. What difference what happens to us, if France remains? Oh, I express myself badly," she broke off. "I wish I could make you feel what we feel!"

"I understand your point of view, and I do respect it: yet, Mademoiselle, there is something that I believe is more important, and that is to see the truth. Don't condemn too hastily. You have the gift of faith: it is a wonderful thing. We are unhappier, I grant you; but we cannot change our independence. Pardon me if I am not convinced."

"In what way?"

"I still maintain that when the people's eyes are open, they will see that they are the ones who are sacrificed. The nationality you speak of is a beautiful thing, — a

dramatically beautiful thing. I can understand how honor, glory, duty — those Middle Ages words — thrill your class. But the others, — the peasant, the workman; no, no, he fights without understanding, blindly, and he is the one who bears the burden. For is it not true that it is the great mass, the men in the fields and in the streets, that bears the burden and receives nothing?"

She started to answer and checked herself, but immediately, impelled by an impulse too strong to be mastered, she said:

"Monsieur Magnus, it is my right to answer that. At New Year's, 1914, in my family, we sat down to table, fifteen of us: my mother, my father, my five brothers, uncles and cousins — fifteen. Five are left to-day: myself, a brother and two cousins at the front, and a brother who in another year will go to do his duty as a volunteer; and, if for any reason he should seek to avoid it, we would disown him though he were the last of our name."

She said it quietly without change of voice. We looked at her, incapable of reply. Tears started to the eyes of Peter Magnus. He took off his hat and said solemnly:

"If all the world were like you, Mademoiselle Duvernoy, there would be no rebels like me."

And, for that, I shall always maintain a respect for Peter Magnus.

X

LATER in the afternoon I came out of the smoking room on the upper deck for a breath of fresh air. To my surprise I had hardly started for a turn among the rafts and lifeboats when I perceived the slender figure of Mademoiselle Duvernoy standing by the rail. I went

to her. One glance, and I knew that her mood had been melancholy.

"If you are going to indulge in the mopes — you know what the mopes are — the blues — I refuse to leave you alone."

"But, Monsieur Littledale, I don't see —" she began, drawing herself up.

"What business it is of mine?" I said, smiling. "No, no, you can intimidate me at other times — you do that, you know — but not now, when I feel that you are sad, and — please don't go away," I said hurriedly, as she began to draw her cape about her. "I want to talk to you."

"But in France we don't talk alone with young men," she protested, yet I noticed that she lingered.

"You are not in France, now, and we are not alone," I said, indicating a group of children who were playing on the opposite deck.

She glanced in the direction of my gesture.

"Please, I do want to talk to you."

Her look came to my eyes, the first time that her glance had met mine openly, and in the look was gravity, friendliness, and a shade of uncertainty. Then she looked away, hesitating.

"It is a new country and a new life you are going to, Mademoiselle," I said quickly, "and if our ways seem freer, you will find at the bottom that you can always count on one thing, — the friendship and protection of our men."

"You have been very kind to me, Mr. Littledale," she said solemnly.

"I did not mean that."

She did not turn her glance from the horizon, but her head nodded twice, and a rare smile touched the corners of her lips.

For the last days the air had been growing clearer, vibrant with the vitality of younger skies: skies that had not been drenched in the suffering of many multitudes. In the west, the sun was falling below the green-blue horizon that wavered in sharp outline; a magnificent sweep of golden reds was spreading across the cloud-strewn skies; colors of hope and exaltation, colors of action. I, who had walked in doubts, felt the boundless youth and opportunity which came streaming towards me from the world of the future.

"It has been a privilege to meet you," I said warmly. "I wish I could talk over — so many things with you."

"Yes, I feel what is in your mind: you are torn between two ideas —"

"Two? Twenty! I listen to every one; to Magnus, who sometimes convinces me; to Brinsmade, whom I want to believe; to twenty different points of view I pick up in the smoking room. I want to see my way clear as an American, to something that stands out and thrills me as the one word 'France' thrills you. I want to have some beautiful ideal of my country to live for, and I can't yet see what we stand for. I've lost all the smug, complacent ideas I had, and I don't see anything else clearly."

"I have felt that," she said, in her simple way, unconscious of the intimacy into which we were drifting. "Yes, I have felt that often as I watched your face when you were listening to Mr. Magnus and Mr. Brinsmade."

"They debate what's going to happen to America in a hundred years! What interests me is what's going to happen now."

"Do you believe you will get into the war?"

"I hope so, from the bottom of my heart."

"It will be a great awakening. We in France needed the war, too. You see only what is glorious in us now.

You don't know what went before. The heart of the people was pure in the great, beautiful fields of France, and that saved us. But we had begun to lose faith; we even said that we were decadent, that our day had passed. We were led by false leaders who talked to the people of their 'rights,' not of their duties. And these 'rights,' — what were they? To do as they pleased, to seek to make life easier. They were breaking down the faith of the people, the faith in the family, with their right to live each for himself; the faith in France, with their internationalism; and their faith in God, which is at the bottom of it all."

"Yes, so you said."

"You do not believe?" she said, turning to me.

"I hope," I said, after a moment's pause.

"That may be enough for you, for you have traditions, traditions founded in faith. But is that enough for the people?"

"Magnus says it is just what keeps them from progressing."

"How does he say that?"

"He says that the Church is a superstition worked in the interests of property. When the Church tells them that the reward will come in another life, it blinds them to what they can accomplish in this if they would organize and act."

"Mr. Magnus is honest and logical, because he does not believe," she said, to my surprise. "Those who are not honest with themselves are those who try to stand halfway."

"But how would you answer him?" I said, troubled.

"By his own argument. If there is no future life, and therefore no faith, why should we not do anything we please — steal, murder; why should we abide by any law?"

"But he would supplant that by devotion to the Common State," I said, rather awkwardly.

"Isn't that just what the Prussians are doing, with all their pretensions of calling on God? Isn't that why we hate the Prussian idea and resent it, because it has no faith, either in the sacredness of one's word or in the feelings of humanity? Isn't it founded on the idea of force, and isn't that what would result from any State formed on agnosticism? Force, and only force, would prevail."

"But would it?"

"Hasn't it? Take our own Revolution: what happened? Didn't it produce worse tyrants, men of force, — Marat, Robespierre? And what killed the Revolution? The attempt to destroy faith, in the abolishing of religion. You see, you are questioning yourself as though faith were only a spiritual speculation. It is much more than that, Mr. Littledale: it is the beginning and end of all political organization. Don't you see?"

"When you speak, it is easy to be convinced," I said, yielding to the honesty in her eyes and the impassioned ring of her voice.

The discussion had carried her out of herself. The stiff preciseness had gone. Her words, warm and glowing, thrilled me. It was not that she convinced me of what she said but that she convinced me of herself. I felt the woman in her, swept by generous impulses, glowing with a beautiful ideal, — a great nature, with so much need to give. She checked herself.

"Pardon. I am perhaps speaking too frankly."

"No, no, you could never do that."

I waited her pleasure, wishing to speak but finding no words, afraid of the interruption which might come.

"I wonder what you were like before? I cannot see you in your home. But I feel you have changed."

She said it without looking at me, hardly aware that she had spoken her thoughts aloud.

"Yes, great changes — so great that it is hard to look back and understand myself. The first night there on the deck — you remember — I could not sleep, and I kept going back over what I had been. You, too; I felt you were awake, feverishly awake. Was I right?" She nodded, but without looking at me. "I rebelled at going back! Oh, that's what war does for you. Whether you hate it or love it, it ends by creating about you a new life and the other becomes something incredible, something you wish to forget, something you don't wish to interfere with your liberty of action. For, Mademoiselle, the thing that's hard at first is to build up for yourself a new life that will satisfy, a new philosophy; a new code of morals, — something to die with, not to live by. All that is so different from the other thing that I have seen men at my side who loved their homes shrink from opening a letter. For when you have prepared yourself to die it is hard to remember how you have lived. That was what I was rebelling against, — the thought of going back, taking up life again, only to have to go through all the mental pain of readjustment."

"You are going back?" she said, turning to me in surprise.

"I am on a furlough only."

"I didn't know — I did not realize."

"You ask if there have not been great changes in my life? Many, so that I wonder what is coming. Up to the present, my life has been without meaning, and I have only just realized it. It's the change — the contrast: the coming back has opened my eyes. It's been drifting — just drifting — nothing else. I don't suppose I had an idea that was really my own or that I had thought out. Was it my fault, or the education they gave me? I

don't know. I went through school and college, with a nice collection of hand-picked acquaintances, wafted gently from one exclusive club to another. In the course of things I would have married in my own set a charming, irreproachable girl — a spoiled child, with entirely too much money — and settled down to the weary task of warding off boredom. Why I didn't do it, I don't know. A curious, rebellious pride, perhaps. I went abroad, to Paris, two years. Well, I came through that! I do not see them clearly yet or their relation to my life. They may have been necessary: time only will tell. I only know that the mobilization was like an escape into pure air. The rest? Just an acceptance of a thing that can't be changed, — a happiness in finding some purpose."

"Monsieur, all this has made you what you are," she said, directly. "I did feel much of this. I felt this restlessness in you. And I think I know what you are going to do. You have qualities of the heart that will make you see clearly in the end; the qualities of the heart are sounder, truer than the qualities of the mind; make no mistake. Will you tell me about her? The young girl?"

"May I?" We had drawn a little together and stood looking over the rail at the tumbling swirl below. "After all, why not?" I added, hesitating.

"Monsieur, sometimes it is easier to speak of the deep things in our hearts to some one we meet just for a moment and never see again, when each is true of heart and understands." She turned and a smile touched her lips, — a smile of dignity and friendliness. "I should not ask it if I did not think, if I did not feel very strongly, that I might help you to see a little clearer. She loves you, does she not?"

I did not realize then how strange the conversation was, nor the sudden intimacy that drew us together.

"It is easy to tell you anything, Mademoiselle," I said,

smiling back into her eyes. "But the situation is not just what you think. Do you believe in marriage without love?"

"I believe — we are taught to believe — that love should follow marriage," she said, hesitating. "And if both are loyal — "

"That is your tradition; it is not ours. And you — is it always possible for you to control your hearts?"

"We are taught that such love can only mean tragedy and unhappiness," she answered, staring away from me.

"Mademoiselle, it is Mr. Brinsmade's daughter." She looked up at this, startled. "We have grown up together. She is charming. I admire and respect her. Once, I thought it was a little more than that. But — but I do not love her. Let me tell you all. It would mean everything to me — power, opportunity, a big life — and Mr. Brinsmade would like it." Then I told her of our conversation, as best I could remember. "And now, to be honest, I think — I believe that she cares for me and — yet I do not love her."

"Your pride is very strong," she said solemnly.

"I suppose it is."

She considered a long moment before she began to speak.

"Monsieur, I feel, no matter what you may think today, your happiness lies there. The question of money is what makes it difficult to you, but it is a question that should not come into it at all. Mr. Brinsmade is right. Money is opportunity, to be utilized or to be thrown away. He is a man with big ideas, a man who goes forward, and you will go forward with him. I do feel I understand your nature more than you do yourself, perhaps. You need stability in life, a home, and a woman who loves you. A woman who is true, loyal and loves you, you will love in the end, believe me."

"Mademoiselle, do you believe that you can make yourself love?"

"There are many kinds of love, Monsieur Littledale: loves that destroy us and wreck our lives; loves that pass; loves that we must fight down to be true to ourselves; but there is another love which is calm and security, which comes from mutual respect, the love that comes with sharing life together loyally; and that love will come later to you, for you have the qualities of the heart that count."

"To some, to some brought up in different traditions, perhaps," I said rebelliously. "But with myself — no."

"Wait, the young girl is a woman, a charming woman now, and all the advantages are in her hands."

"It is of course what I should do," I said, shrugging my shoulders. Then, all at once, the incongruity of it struck me, and I broke into a laugh. "After all, there is one thing we forget."

"What is that?"

"That all such things are quite unimportant: in a few months' time I go back. It is not a time to be making such decisions."

"You will come through safely, Monsieur Littledale," she said, in a tone of deep conviction. "I know it. I feel it. I have strange intuitions sometimes. I see storm and trouble ahead but I see the end in happiness for you." She could not have realized the gentleness which came into her voice. I knew that the secret of her change of manner was the introduction of a third. Was I altogether honest in permitting a serious discussion, for no thought of such a marriage was then in my mind. I watched her face eagerly, wondering at the gentle womanliness that came out of its hidden cell, — all unconsciousness and simplicity.

"And your mother — what is she like?" she said.

"Mother? Why, I don't know how to describe her," I said, in some perplexity. "I don't know whether you'd understand. Mother goes in for public things — very strong on woman suffrage, charities, uplift, and pacifism. She's a terrific worker. She has terrific convictions — terrific! The Governor's a trump; a sort of country gentleman. He's written quite a bit; he has convictions, too: other convictions. There's six of us; all with convictions — separate convictions. Oh, we'd amuse you. A typical American family."

She shook her head.

"That seems so strange; but don't your families stand together?"

"Well, there's one thing unites us," I said, with a laugh. "We agree on our right to disagree."

She frowned in some perplexity.

"I don't think I understand a home like that."

"It isn't like your French idea of home. We are all tremendously devoted to each other but the thing you mean — the family tradition — the standing for one definite idea — that doesn't exist."

"Are you a happy race, I wonder?"

The question surprised me.

"I had never thought of that. I should say we are — yes — and yet — I don't know: perhaps we are not. We are a nation of individualists, full of driving energy and ambition. We all want something we haven't got. I'm afraid it's rather a material ambition, usually. I'd like to believe it makes for the greatness of the country, — this restlessness, this discontent, this wanting to push up: but perhaps we do sacrifice a good deal to it. I haven't thought over that much."

"I think that what makes my nation truly great is that we are the happiest people in the world."

"I don't think I quite understand you."

"Everything is so well ordered with us," she said, and her voice softened as she spoke of loved things. "Just as our beautiful land is so well ordered: the fields so well laid out, the trees so well disciplined, the little, red-topped villages so clean and so prosperous, so in harmony. Just so in our family life: it is so well ordered. We have real grandmothers and real grandchildren, and our fathers are real heads of the family. I don't think a Frenchwoman would want to have a husband who didn't have authority, to whom she didn't look up. And our mothers — you can never know the affection, the deference, the respect that surrounds them."

"Yes, I know that: it's a rare and beautiful thing."

"We have such pride in what the family has stood for. We live as one, we surround the family life with so many quaint little customs. There is much beauty and simplicity in it, for we are willing to be happy as our grandfathers have been happy; and that happiness is not selfish; it means many, many sacrifices often, but that makes it true happiness because we cannot be happy unless we keep our pride in our ideals." She stopped. "I don't know if you understand me, but I think we study how to live more than you do. And, because we French are so happy together, we can give everything to keep that happiness undefiled and pass it down to our children."

"Tell me of yourself — of your life," I said, strangely moved.

She drew back, as though she had been unaware of a listener. The change was so instantaneous that it startled me.

"But — Monsieur — certain things I cannot discuss —"

"Yet you asked me the same questions, didn't you?"

"I? But I —"

She was thrown into confusion — at loss for an answer — and, all at once, her face went red.

"I only want you to understand, Mademoiselle," I said, with kindness, "that it seemed a natural thing. It was not an impertinence. I could never be impertinent to you."

"You make me feel — " She hesitated again. "I am sorry — I didn't realize. But you made me talk. It were better I should not; I knew I should not."

"For heaven's sake, why not?"

"I do not want to hurt you, Monsieur Littledale. You have been so kind, so generous; but you make me do things I don't want to do, — things that are against my traditions, for I am traveling alone, unprotected —"

"Mademoiselle Duvernoy, I shall consider it a great privilege to be your friend now and hereafter."

"That cannot be; it is not possible; it is not right. We go different ways in the world."

"I don't believe that —"

"We go different ways," she repeated firmly. "If you will be generous, you will not ask any more — please."

She ended so low that it came to me in a whisper.

"I can be generous, but not to that point," I said obstinately. "I want another answer."

"Monsieur Littledale, we are just chance acquaintances," she said, bringing her hands together in impulsive entreaty. "There is no reason —"

"I do not believe we are what you say. It was something more than that which brought me to your side that first night here."

"What do you mean?"

She turned to me, with startled eyes.

"The feeling that made me know you were in — in danger."

"In danger!"

"In danger, Mademoiselle. I felt it so strongly that it sent me to you, and I did not dare leave you alone."

I had no sooner said it than I realized how profoundly and fatally I had erred. The woman who faced me I had never seen before.

"Monsieur, you do not know me. I am not of a race of cowards. I do not take a coward's way out of life."

I looked at her, without power to answer, — amazed and baffled by the swift succession of emotions which had culminated in this erect and scornful pride. My eyes dropped before the look.

"Mademoiselle," I said, at last. "I have offended you. I have offended you, when my only thought, from the moment I met you, has been to offer you all my friendship and deference. I am profoundly and miserably sorry."

I left her and went down the deck to the farther rail. There was no resentment towards her, — only a weak, sinking misery that I should have wounded her. My ears were filled with the sound of her gentleness. I remembered only the hurt pride in her eyes. I saw her face in the mists of the twilight, her deep eyes looking gravely out at me.

"Good God! How could she think I would say or do word or deed to hurt her!" I said to myself, again and again.

"Monsieur Littledale?"

Unperceived, she had come to me. She was there, waiting at my side.

"Monsieur Littledale, I am sorry, too."

Her hands were clasped before her, and the eyes that looked to me in compassion and forgiveness were blurred. I put out my hands blindly, but she had fled. I stood there, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, my heart pounding within me.

It was then I knew that I loved her.

XI

SHE was not down to dinner when I came eagerly into the crowded *salon*. She was not on the deck when I hurried up, nor did she appear again that night. I slept badly and was out with the dawn, making endless rounds through the sailors, who were swabbing down the decks.

I knew that I was beginning to love her, nor was I so dull as not to feel that to her, too, I was more than just a chance acquaintance. I did not attempt to analyze my feelings or to penetrate the future. The present hour was too imperious. My mood was not of exultation but of fear of her shy and persistent avoidance of me. If only a week were before us! But the day was the last, and the morrow would bring America, and — separation. I think I did not realize the full force of the emotion that had swept over me; nor all the complexities, the hazards, and the tragic destiny that it had, in the twinkling of an eye, laid upon my life. My only thought was to see her again to know from her first look that I still retained what had come to us in the dusk before. I knew that everything was horribly against me. I was certain, for some reason I could not fathom, that she would resist me, had resisted me from the first. I was sure of nothing. But though it meant finally but emptiness and the struggle to forget, I was powerless to draw back now.

Breakfast passed, and the morning drew out, and she did not come. I went to my chair and threw myself down, bodily and mentally tired. A vast feeling of depression possessed me. Magnus came and talked to me. I was conscious of seeming to listen; I caught phrases, heard myself making responses. I knew nothing. My

heart sank within me and such a feeling of physical weakness possessed me, in this new, utter sense of loneliness, that I could do no more than lie there, stretched inertly, saying again and again to myself:

"She will not come. I have frightened her away."

Yet she had not passed the door before I was instantly aware of it. A wave of happiness and well-being went through me, as though my lungs had filled with the first life-giving breath of air. She was coming, head down and walking fast. I sprang up and hurried to relieve her of the rug she was carrying. I knew she saw me, for she wavered and turned aside to speak to a little Frenchwoman who was traveling with her baby.

"Good morning, Mademoiselle."

"Good morning, Monsieur."

"May I take your rug?"

She glanced at her arm as though she had just perceived its burden.

"Thank you, Monsieur."

I went to her chair and prepared it for her coming. All the depression had left me at the first glance into her gray eyes. She, too, had felt the tumult and the turmoil; it was written there in weariness and strain. A violent joy, a sense of living and of hope, surged up in me, as I awaited her first words. When I turned she had taken the arm of her companion and was silently pacing off the deck.

An intuition, the instinct born of the struggle which is inseparable from love, came to me. I, too, would avoid her and, in my absence, in the longing denied, she would suffer, too, and by that suffering come closer to me. Cruel? Yes, as in such moments the impulse is to beat down all obstacles, to contend without quarter for the happiness that lies beyond the agony of doubt and disbelief! I rose and went into the smoking room, stealing

myself to patience, resolved not to leave it until luncheon. I sat there ten, fifteen, twenty minutes. At the end of a half-hour I could bear it no longer. I went out hurriedly and, all my resolutions forgot, straight to where she waited in her chair.

"Mademoiselle, you have not forgiven me," I said, without preliminaries.

"Why?"

She turned, startled, and the new conflict I saw in the haunted weariness of her glance brought me a sense of coming victory.

"Because you avoid me."

"I?"

She could not meet the direct challenge of my look and turned away. Still I pursued, without compassion.

"Yes. You avoid me. Would you rather that I did not remain here?" I asked suddenly, sure of her answer. "For nothing in the world would I do anything that would be distasteful to you. Tell me only what you wish. Shall I go?"

She hesitated and, before the trouble I felt in her, my resolve almost gave way. Yet, because I was fighting for both of us, I held firm.

"Only tell me what you wish."

Once or twice she seemed to make up her mind to speak, but each time she checked herself.

"Do you realize that by this time to-morrow we shall be steaming up New York harbor?"

"This time to-morrow!"

"This time to-morrow."

She put down the book she held in her hands with a show of purpose, and looked out gravely.

"A strange world to both of us," I said.

To my annoyance, the sound of the gong began to rumble through the ship.

"What — already?" she said, to my delight, looking incredulously at her watch.

"Take your luncheon up here; it's a perfect day."

"What a good idea! Yes, I think I shall."

I hesitated, all my assurance melting away.

"I suppose the terrible gods of French etiquette would rock on their thrones if I stayed, too —"

"I should feel very conspicuous."

"Yes, yes, of course. I knew you would feel that way."

My tone fell, in such unconcealed chagrin that she could not help noticing it. She sat up and glanced down the deck. Other groups, yielding to the sunlight which poured over the dancing ocean and flung rainbows in the spray, were preparing to picnic above.

"It is the last day," I repeated.

"Please — I should like if you will stay," she said, all at once, and then blushed and looked away.

I affected not to notice her confusion and busied myself with a serious contemplation of the menu.

"There, it'll be just like a meal at the front! Not quite so good cooking as at one of your little country inns. Do you know, what you said the other day's been in my mind?"

"What was that?"

"About seeing death at first hand. I didn't feel the way you did. I was all broken up the first time; couldn't sleep for a week. And yet, you Frenchwomen go through all that and can still smile. Why is it? Have we weaker nerves?"

"Don't you think there is something changed in our smiles?" she said, looking up.

"Yes, yes, I feel that. But you have so much faith in the good of the world, you seem so uplifted by your experience, there is something so serene in your eyes —"

I stopped, realizing how personal my analysis was growing.

"Ah, but when you are not just a spectator, when you are helping, it is different. What is uplifting in service is that your own self becomes of such little importance."

"Yes, but I should think your memories —" I broke off. "When you told that fairy tale to Master Jack, the first day, you could even laugh."

"It's because what I remember is not pain and ugliness but only the beauty of sacrifice and the nobility of men who at other times may have been very sordid," she said warmly. "Do you know what our memories are?" She half closed her eyes, and a tender look touched her lips. "I think of one Christmas Eve — a great barn where I was nursing — a barn that had been improvised into a hospital, with beds in the straw, just like the birthplace of the little Saviour. I don't like to speak of myself, but I will tell you this. We stayed — my mother and I — in a little village on the frontier — our village — when the Germans came through; and that village, our little village, changed hands six times."

"And you stayed — you and your mother?"

"We stayed, not to abandon our people and to take care of our poor wounded."

"And they let you do that?"

"They needed some one to take care of their own," she said, with a frown, "and we agreed — my mother and I — to do that if we could be permitted to nurse our own men. Six times the village changed hands, but on that night — Christmas Night — it was ours. So we made ready to celebrate. We organized a concert. Oh, it was a strange concert! There were over a hundred wounded in that great barn, and only a dozen could stand on their legs, but they were all so gay, for that is something our brave little *poilus* never lose, — their gaiety.

And there was to be a tree, and all sorts of funny presents. And the concert! There was a quartet, and there was a waiter from the Café de Paris who was lying in a stall — with his feet carried off — who was to sing comic songs, and a real tenor from the *Conservatoire,* who would sing magnificent arias from the opera, and then there was to be a comic recitation, and a classic recitation. Every one quite forgot their troubles in the excitement. But Christmas morning a dozen wounded were brought in, and one, a sergeant of chasseurs, in such a dreadful state that we did not think he would live through the day. So of course, we prepared to give up the celebration: and what do you think? He heard the men talking, and he sent for me.

" 'Mademoiselle, is it true you are giving up the concert on my account?'

" 'You are in a bad way, *mon petit!*' I told him.

" 'Bad way! *Allons!* I am going to die,' he broke out. *'Eh, bien!* I choose to die gaily, instead of in a corner, like a dog. It is my wish that the concert go on. And tell the comrades to sing out good and strong!'

"It was done, as he wished."

"And he died?"

"Not that day, but the next," she said, "without a complaint. Do you think that when I can remember there are men like that in France, I have a right to be sad?"

The deck steward came and went, and we began our luncheon. A hundred questions were on my tongue, but I gave voice to none.

"They were so patient and so simple in their courage," she continued gravely, "always trying to help me. Many times, I've had a soldier who was suffering say to me:

" *'Allons,* Mam'zelle, get your sleep to-night. If this arm of mine won't keep quiet, I can be of some use. I'll make the rounds.' "

"And the brave fellows who fretted because they couldn't return soon enough to the lines! They were so gay. I remember a little Breton who had both legs gone, posing for his photograph, with stockings pinned to his trousers, and saying:

" 'When I get up to Paris, I'll get a pair of legs that'll make me two inches taller than this old Auvergnat over here!' "

"Those are the things that are good to remember. Poor boys! There were so many that died unnecessarily! We were so few, and we could do so little!"

"But you had doctors?"

She shook her head.

"I am speaking of the first months. Only from time to time a doctor, and, when the Germans had the village, never. But I think that was better."

"I could not have done that," I said, shaking my head. "I think I could meet what I had to meet but — day in and day out — to have seen others suffer, others die like that — "

"I only remember the look of gratitude in their eyes," she said, simply. "And then, I had my part. I had to keep up their morale, you know, and send them back to the front with courage. It would never have done for me to weaken." She turned with a smile and saw the profound gravity on my face. "Believe me, what I say is true," she said solemnly. "It had its hardships, but they were days of beauty, and I never think on them without a thrill of pride in the France I have been privileged to know. Please don't look so grave. I'm afraid I've been too serious."

I was staring at her, looking into the past which she had conjured up, divining things she had passed lightly over.

"Why are you staring so?" she said, a little embarrassed.

"I was trying to imagine you in your white and blue costume, — the most beautiful robe that has ever been given to woman," I said solemnly. "You have no photograph?"

She shook her head.

"I only meant I should have liked to see it."

"I love the uniform, too," she said, and a note of sadness was in her voice.

"But you will go back?" I said, before I could catch myself.

"I shall never go back. Will you take the tray?"

I hastened to obey. When I returned, I saw at once a stiffening of her whole nature against me.

"Confess that you are thinking of the sacred gods of French etiquette," I said, hoping to make her smile.

She acknowledged the hit, with a little confusion.

"Then please blame me, and not your conscience, for I made you talk."

"That is so. You make me talk against my will."

"And now you are wondering how you can run away."

"How do you know me so well?" she said, forced at last into a smile.

"Oh, I do. There is a very stern, uncompromising Mademoiselle Duvernoy, and there is a very gay, happy Mademoiselle Duvernoy."

"Once, there was a very frivolous one," she said, nodding.

"I didn't say that — "

"But it is so; oh, very frivolous — very *mondaine,* before the war — who loved good things, as a child loves sugar plums!"

"What terrible sins you must have had on your conscience!" I said, laughing.

"Oh, but I loved pleasure, very much, and the things of this world. I did, very much."

I smiled.

"I smile, as the Father who heard your confession must have smiled."

She shook her head.

"I was a very superficial little person; not at all tolerant, very satisfied with myself, and very dissatisfied with others."

"Good heavens; I don't think you have ever been anything but the spirit of gentleness!" I broke out.

She drew back instantly, and I hastened to repair the blunder my impulsiveness had made.

"You women of France all have that quality of gentleness," I said hastily, in a more guarded tone. "That is what I notice about all of you."

She relaxed, though not quite convinced.

"You idealize me, Monsieur. We have done our duty, that is all, and we have found in it a great happiness."

"I wish my sister — I used to think of her as my little sister; good heavens, she must be twenty now! — I wish my sister Molly could know you. Of all the family, she is closest to me. I hate to think of her going through four or five years of useless life, dancing herself to death, learning to get bored with every pleasure: she's such a little trump, now." I took out my pocketbook and brought out a photograph of a youngster in pigtail, tanned and straight, looking out with innocent laughter at the most beautiful of worlds.

She took it, and glanced from the photograph to me.

"Yes, I understand. There is something very noble, very pure, very brave. She is your favorite?"

I began to laugh.

"What is it?"

"Do you know, that's only the second time I think you've really looked me in the eyes."

She blushed — as she did easily — and tried to laugh.

"We are told never to look a man in the eyes. It is very old-fashioned to you?"

"But why?"

"Because," she hesitated a little and then went on, looking away from me, "because, when you look in a man's eyes, they say, you are seeking a different meaning to his words." She blushed furiously. "It's not that exactly but — how shall I say? — we are taught that it is too forward — too provocative. But you are laughing at me," she said, covered with confusion.

"I am not laughing, Mademoiselle," I said seriously, "and I like that in you."

The conversation became difficult and a certain diffidence overcame us. A moment before, she had been talking to me freely and impulsively, though a little shy and hesitant, as a young girl. I saw her mood change and a certain womanly dignity come to her.

"Monsieur, I have been thinking much of the confidence you entrusted to me. Have you — have you no photograph of Miss Brinsmade?"

My pocketbook was still in my hand. I drew out a little snapshot and handed it to her. She held it a long time, studying it intently.

"She is very beautiful," she said at last.

"Yes."

"This is how long ago?"

"Three — four years; when she was just out of school."

She nodded, still studying it.

"Monsieur, there is a great deal that is waiting there — a great deal of love — a great deal of nobility. A woman like that will be what you want her to be; only, don't make her wait too long."

I took the photograph, looked at it wondering if she had said all her thought, and slowly replaced it in my pocket.

"Mademoiselle, I, too, have been thinking over our conversation and I feel I may have given you a wrong impression —"

"How so?"

"I was only discussing something that was a remote possibility, nothing that I have really considered. I reproach myself a little; I had not the right — on her account."

"Why?"

"Because I know now that it is quite impossible."

Heavens, how much I wished to say to her, and how little I dared. I waited, wondering if she would understand. She did not answer, but I saw her hands clasp and unclasp in her lap.

"What you have said of marriage is natural to your traditions. Some other man might do as you suggest and find happiness. I know — I know I could not, and keep my self-respect. I shall never marry, Mademoiselle, unless my whole heart goes with it." I hesitated and, despite myself, knowing the danger of it, I added, very low, "I know that now."

She did not hesitate but answered me, instantly and lightly.

"Perhaps, Monsieur, the future will settle that. Will you permit me to hope that it may be so?"

She rose, with a formal nod and made a pretext to descend to her cabin. I saw her to the door and returned, my brain in a whirl. At one moment she had seemed to come to me with such impulsiveness; at the next, to be a thousand miles away. I dropped back into my chair, uneasy and tortured by regrets. A flash of gold on the gray scarf she had left behind her caught my eye and, leaning over, I picked up a little brooch I had always seen at her throat. It was in the form of a locket, heart-shaped, such as children wear. I turned it over in my

hands and saw an inscription on the back, a date and a name written in a free hand:

BERNOLINE

The next moment I realized that unwittingly I had trespassed on the mystery of her identity. I put the pin hastily in my pocket and rose, with an idea to restore it to her immediately. I went into the Ladies' Cabin, hoping to find her there, and then into the writing room. I could not take it, myself, to her stateroom and I did not wish to entrust it to a steward. In the end, I kept it and waited for her reappearance.

XII

It was well into the heart of the afternoon when I discovered her, at her old post on the upper deck.

"Mademoiselle, please do not think that I mean to intrude," I said diffidently, when I had come to her side.

"You are not intruding, and I had hoped that you would come," she said, without evasion. "For, Monsieur, I feel that I ought to say something to you very seriously."

Her manner, in its decision and thoughtfulness, alarmed me.

"I have things, too, which I wish to talk over with you, in the uttermost seriousness. I am a little afraid of that conversation," I said, looking down, "because we are going to disagree. My mind is made up to certain things, Mademoiselle, and I do not think you can change it." I added, looking up into the sadness of her eyes, "Will you grant me a favor — a last favor. There is so little time that is left us. Wait until to-morrow."

She shook her head.

"My conscience reproaches me for putting it off as I have done. Do not make it any harder."

"If it is to be only a memory," I said, "let the memory be complete. It is something even to have had a memory of you. Please grant my request."

I doubt whether she would have yielded even then, though I saw her breast rise and her eyes close at my voice, had I not brought forward the locket, saying:

"Mademoiselle, I came to bring you this. I found it on your chair."

Her hand went to her dress spasmodically, and the color left her face with the violence of her emotion.

"I must tell you. I did not realize what I was doing, but I saw the name on the back."

"You did not open the locket?" she said, in terror.

"Mademoiselle, I am sorry that you asked that question."

"Forgive me — I — forgive me." She put her hand to her eyes, and stood trembling from head to foot. God knows it was hard not to take her in my arms. But I stood there, gritting my teeth, waiting until she grew quiet once more.

"Bernoline — so that is your name?" I said softly.

"Yes, that is my name."

"I have known, from the first. Bernoline — I am glad I saw it, for the other name I could not associate with you."

"Monsieur." She turned, and this time her eyes looked me through and through. "You are a man of honor? Give me your word of honor never to mention that name to a human being. Oh, I do not mean to hurt you — I do trust you. But — I must have your word!"

"You have hurt me," I said. "It was not necessary, but — you have my word."

Her agitation was so extreme that she hardly noticed my reply.

"Mademoiselle — no one who has had the privilege of knowing you — of listening to you — can ever believe that you were brought up to be a governess. And if you had been," I added hastily, "that would not make the slightest difference. You are you, and that is sufficient. I think, Mademoiselle, I never wanted anything more in the world than to be your friend."

She shook her head again at this, but the agitation passed and her voice was soft with pleading as she answered me:

"Monsieur Littledale, you will forgive me? From the heart? I did not know what I was saying. I should always trust you — in everything — without a doubt."

"Thank you," I said, all choked up.

"Your friendship? Yes. But, friends? No. To-morrow, it is to be good-by," she said, more gently than I had heard her. "Is it not better to say now what we must say to each other?"

"No, no — to-morrow."

"To-morrow, then. Since you asked it and because I did hurt you," she answered. "Only, make no mistake. You have seen me, Monsieur, in moments of weakness. Why I have been so I do not know: I am not like that. I can do what has to be done." The locket was in her hands; she held it before her. "It is the last thing that remains of all my past life. I had no right to keep it; I have been wrong. Monsieur Littledale, I think you will understand now how immovable my resolution is, when I know what must be done!"

She opened her hand, and the locket, a tiny streak of gold, vanished into the sea.

"It was my baby pin, and the name was in the handwriting of my father."

It was done without a tremor and the chill of the waters, into which the locket had passed, possessed me.

Instinctively we avoided the danger of personal references. For the rest of the afternoon we sat there together, talking eagerly, unconscious as two children of the shortening day. I do not remember ever to have known such an exquisite and eager pleasure as in this impulsive searching of our minds. It was the delight in meeting in intimate conversation some one who woke in me all my dormant imagination and led me along suddenly opening galleries, into unsuspected worlds. As we rambled on, touching lightly or profoundly twenty changing ideas, a deep tranquillity came to my restless spirit, not simply from the contemplation of the serenity that lay on her open forehead and deep in her clear, untroubled eyes, nor the charm of listening to the melody of her voice, but in the calm certitude of coming happiness. I was happy; yes, for that one all too brief afternoon. I was happy as I never realized happiness could come to me. For I saw such happiness in her face that at times she seemed no more than a girl of sixteen, artlessly spreading before me her imagination and her treasured thoughts. She was happy. I knew what that meant. I was content to go no further, sure that on the morrow, when we came to serious discussion, I could turn all her objections, based, as I believed them to be, on a sentiment of too scrupulous pride.

We were in the midst of a gay debate on the upbringing of the young girl in France, when the sound of the dinner gong broke in on our illusions.

"What, so soon!"

"It is not possible!"

The two cries came simultaneously. We stood up, suddenly sobered. I saw her face change.

"And, to-morrow afternoon — here," I said confidently.

"It were better to say good-by now," she said wearily.

"It will not be good-by, Mademoiselle."

She shook her head and gave me her hand, and I remember now how heavily it lay for that short second in mine.

"Monsieur, I repeat, you make me do things I do not mean to do, that I have no right to do."

"Wait until to-morrow," I said, so completely happy that I tried to laugh her out of her mood and refused to perceive the solemnity and sadness that settled over her face.

I am glad now, as I look back, for that one hour of absolute faith in the future. Life was a certainty; I was filled with an eagerness to begin and in the knowledge of the rare and beautiful realization of happiness, I had not the slightest fear of the test of the morrow.

XIII

I SPENT the hours after supper in the smoking room, puffing at my pipe, with a new tolerant understanding of the young America before me; of these young spirits, with their exaggerated bursts of humor, their overflowing belief in themselves, their boyish eagerness to return to "God's Country."

"I wonder if they would ever agree on anything," I thought, as I watched the nervous, combustible American need of reaction breaking out in sudden fits of gaiety. "So many minds; so many ideas!"

Some had served from curiosity, more from the love of adventure, and a few, thrilled by the comprehension

of noble ideals. I saw them returning, scattering north, south, and west; into village, farm and city; mechanics, students, idlers; taking up again the easy, careless run of American lives; moving on obedient to the accidents which determined their paths; good-natured, generous, emotional, keen, ambitious, seeking that success that is counted in terms of dollars. And then I wondered. I wondered if the sudden, transforming call on the air would ever come to them.

"What does it matter whether a million men die to-day or next year?"

Bernoline's words, words that had startled me at first, came back to me then. "All that matters is how they live!"

"For, if the test come," I thought, "it is our generation that'll have to make good. Make good! Yes, that's one thing we can do: I have no fear of that — and yet, how unprepared we are for the test!"

The next morning I was up and out on deck with the sun. Already there was the note of change. The dream life of the last days, suspended between sea and sky, between one civilization and another in a happy incredulity, was come to an end. Ahead was reality; life to be taken up again, the fixed path to be followed!

Forward, the hatches were off and the donkey engines were diving into the holds. The passengers who came out were unrecognizable in their shore clothes, stiff and formal, retreating into the shells of themselves. The smoke of an ugly freighter smirched the sky. A swarm of sea gulls, noisy as the approaching multitudes of the city, vexed the air. Across the lapping of shallower waters a dozen sails stood out to sea. At noon Fire Island rose out of the waves, passed and sank. A group on the deck below set up a cheer. The thin, white sand

of Long Island slipped over the horizon and grew towards us. America — my America — was there! I felt like snatching off my hat and waving it madly, hysterically, as Frangipani and the others were doing.

I had not thought to be so stirred. I had thought to return with foreboding in my eyes and questions on my lips, and instead there came this involuntary gripping of the heart. Out of the whole world, this, this bit of land was mine!

"Good to see your own again, after all, isn't it?" said Brinsmade, who had come to my side.

I acknowledged it, with a laugh.

"Had no idea it would affect me so."

"It's an instinct that's down pretty deep, David."

We watched the derricks swinging up their cargo. A crowd of young fellows, led by Frangipani's ear-splitting tenor, were singing:

> Give my regards to Broadway,
> Remember me to Herald Square!

"We're all like that," said Brinsmade. "Must blow off steam occasionally. Would you believe it — I feel like jumping down there and doing the same thing!"

"I believe you."

I glanced at my watch for the twentieth time, and went up to the upper deck and waited, scanning the horizon that was perplexed with the drift of the great city; scows, tugboats, coast liners and pilot boats, — a busy officious rabble. Then Bernoline came.

She was gloved and bonneted, an umbrella in her hand, veiled, as she had been on the day of departure. My heart sank. I was quite unprepared for this. In my rapt imagination I had expected the Bernoline of yesterday, impulsive and generous, a woman turning back into the eager unconsciousness of girlhood. This was

more than a mask. She had retreated behind a barrier of impersonality, — an impersonality as stiff and starched and forbidding as the outward form.

"Monsieur Littledale, will you walk with me a moment?"

The voice was calm, self-possessed and resolved. I was so overcome, I had already such a sensation of futility and defeat, that I do not know that I even acknowledged her greeting as I turned and followed at her side.

"A little farther — there — here we can be alone."

We crossed and found a sheltered nook. I stood, staring down. All below me was ugliness, and I remember now how suddenly depressed it made me to be brought face to face with this sordid realism, — this muddy water, streaked with oil, the waste, refuse and litter of the city. The siren blew, once, twice, in shattering blasts. We moved onward, towards the river head.

"Monsieur, I have to thank you, and I do thank you deeply for your perfect courtesy towards me." Her voice sank lower. "You have been loyal and considerate. It is a memory I shall always retain of an American gentleman. Now, I am going to appeal to that chivalry and to that loyalty."

"You are going to ask me never to see you again."

She hesitated before the shock of pronouncing the decision which must have been in her thoughts for days. Then, recovering herself, she said, calmly:

"That is exactly what I must ask of you."

"I do not understand — *must?*"

"Must."

All that I had thought out, every argument which I had built up victoriously to combat her resolution, all power of reasoning, left me. Intuition, which never fails at such times, told me that before this Bernoline nothing that I could say or do would avail. The woman who

spoke was a soul in retreat, and the veil which barred the meeting of our eyes was the veil of renunciation. I blurted out:

"Why? Why do you ask such a thing, such an unnatural thing of me? What reason can there be?"

"Monsieur, I must remind you," she said instantly, "that there is no reason why I should give explanations."

"Wait. I can't talk to you like this," I broke in. "Yesterday — good heavens, where is yesterday? — yesterday I knew you. Only yesterday, we were happy as two children, exploring the world, hand in hand: to-day you come to me and face me as though I were an enemy! You speak to me behind this mask of a veil! You ask me something utterly incomprehensible and, at my first dazed question, you — but what have I done — why, why should you take this way with me?"

She raised her arms instantly and drew back her veil.

"You are not an enemy, Monsieur Littledale."

When I looked at her I was so shocked by the pallor of her face and the dark stricken eyes that I cried involuntarily:

"I have made you suffer like that!"

"It is right that I should suffer," she said bravely, though her lips trembled a bit, "for I have done wrong in even permitting you to speak to me."

"Why? What wrong?" I said desperately. "What wrong is there in our friendship? I have never said a word to you, Mademoiselle, that could not be said before a third person. I never shall. Leave it as it is. Keep me in your life — as a friend, only."

She shook her head, and her eyes never wavered from mine.

"You make it very hard for me. Yet, because I feel that what has happened is my fault, I must say things that it is very hard for a woman to say. *Mon ami*, I

shall not disguise from you that, had I the right, your devotion would mean to me the greatest happiness in the world. Let us not play with a situation that is too serious for half-truths. What might be cannot be. I tell you this, and after what I have told you, my friend, without concealment, I ask you to believe without further question."

"Good God! And what do you think I feel!"

"Try to forgive me — if not now, a little later. I accuse myself bitterly. Don't — don't show me how I have hurt you."

"Bernoline! Bernoline! Don't say such things."

I looked away, at the world that grew blurred, and at the sky and water, which ran together before my eyes. Everything was against me — the minutes even, dwindling away as we moved inexorably towards the final parting. At one moment I rebelled against the needless insensate pain of it all. Something in me called out: "She is a woman — a woman that suffers as you do. Clasp her in your arms — beat down all opposition — still all her doubts and fears with the thing that is above reasoning. Be cruel. It is the only way. Be cruel now, to be happy always."

But at the next moment, at the thought of all it must have cost her to have said what she had said; at the struggle I had seen in her eyes, just to spare her this one added touch of pain, I was ready to accept everything she asked as she asked it. So, I stood, struggling with many impulses. At the end, I raised my head, and said:

"Bernoline, you are right: it can be no question of friendship between us. You have done a very brave thing. I wish I could do as big a thing. I cannot. There is no earthly reason which I can conceive of that can come between us. Do you think, now, after what you have shown me, I could go away without an explanation

and not be haunted by the thought of what might have been!"

"Monsieur Littledale, you do not realize the difference between our positions. I am come here to this world to earn my living, as governess, nurse, companion, in whatever way God will show me."

"Good heavens, what difference does that make to me?"

"It does, to me: it is a question of pride. I have chosen my way, and I must do as others do. Are you going to make it harder?"

"Bernoline, that is not the real reason," I said sternly.

"*Mon ami,* there is the difference in religion — "

"Bernoline, that is not the real reason!"

"Monsieur Littledale," she said, wavering from the look in my eyes, "I repeat, I alone have the right to decide, and I do not admit — "

"And I tell you now I will never let you go out of my life, no matter what you may ask of me!"

There was a long moment before she again raised her head.

"You make it very difficult for me, *mon ami;* if you knew how difficult, I think you would be more generous."

The rebellious combat in me died away before the break in her voice. I looked, and saw her eyes closed with sudden tears.

"Oh, don't," I said brokenly. "Anything — anything but that, Bernoline!"

"My friend, I will not lie to you," she said, after a moment. "If I could — if it were right — I should prize beyond all things your friendship."

"Friendship!"

"It cannot be. I have been wrong, very, very wrong to have even talked to you as I have — but at moments it was beyond my strength. I reproach myself, bitterly! David, *mon ami,*" she said suddenly, and her hand came

out bravely and lay on mine. "I have more than I can bear, now. If you insist, I will tell you, but — it will break my heart to do so. I am going to ask you, once more. If you have the great heart I believe you have, my friend, my good loyal friend, if you do not want me to suffer more than I can bear to suffer, if I am to hold to my own respect, give me your promise never to see me again. Ask me no questions; trust me. Go your own way and let me go mine."

Her hands had come together in supplication; her eyes had in them a terror of returning pain and their look hung in mortal distress on my decision. Her agitation communicated itself to me; confusion was in my eyes, and in my heart was a chill.

"Good God! What can I do, when you ask me like that?" I said helplessly. "I promise. It shall be as you wish. I — it — I promise."

"Merci, oh, mon Dieu!"

I heard her cry like something far off; all the world had dropped away from me. She came close to me; perhaps my very helplessness disarmed her.

"David, I never meant to hurt you so. Believe me, what I do is for you — for you, first. Keep me as a memory of something beautiful in your life. Day and night I shall have you in my prayers — you and your happiness. That will come, David. You will forget what I was too weak to prevent."

I bowed my head, incapable of speech.

"There is only one thing I ask, now," I said at last. "Oh, it's only a little thing, otherwise it would be too cruel: I ask only to be allowed to see you through the landing — just the last courtesies."

"Yes, *mon ami.*"

I held out my hand abruptly, and she gave me both of hers. She was so close to me that for a moment we

swayed against each other, parting and longing in our eyes so poignant that all the world seemed like a whirlpool drawing us down together.

"Your promise, David, your promise!"

I released her hands instantly and my eyes closed not to see her so near and so weak. When I knew what I was doing again, I was alone. How long I had been there, I do not know. A great mass was before me, thrusting a torch into the skies and the kindling stars. I went down the deck like a drunken man and ran into Hungerford, who came up gayly.

"Hello, there, seen a paper?" He checked himself, staring at my face. "Here — Big Dale — what's wrong?"

"Wrong — nothing's wrong!"

I felt his arm under mine and was glad for this touch of another human being in my blank loneliness. I heard him rambling on, nodded my head, and knew not a word he was saying. This for long minutes, while gradually I fought back to myself.

To this day I can feel the overwhelming insolence of the stone weight of New York rising out of the waters, crushing me down in my utter loneliness. An invisible hand was lighting up the city; glass squadrons suddenly relieved, floated in carnival pomp across the night. Across the vanishing space of bridges, feverish traveling flames shot out, — one, two, and then another. A furnace belched against the sky. Electric signs swarmed out of the dusk. Below me, over the swift, oily, painted waters, were green lights, red lights, ferryboats afire, tugs coming and going, shrieking, puffing, roaring, — and always we moved on, irrevocably on, past the Battery, past the oozing, slimy hulks of the city wharves, rotting below the fiery splendor of the city's rise; stagnant as poverty beneath the soaring pride of wealth, in the miraculous city of tragic contrasts! How vast it was, how unhuman!

Every note a thousand times multiplied, — every sensation of multitude! Multitude on multitude — armies of order and disorder — a collective tyranny that roared over me on the threshold of America, as the resistless downward plunge of Niagara beats endlessly. Torrent of forty nations and twenty creeds, conflict of tongues and churning of races — not my America, but the world-vision of Peter Magnus — multitudes moving like glaciers towards destinies no one might confidently predict!

And, against this howling contention, this churning, grinding background, I saw but one figure, — the shadow of a woman, the woman I loved, exiled and alone.

At six o'clock it was all over. I stood at her carriage door, bareheaded, bending over her hand. The bustle of the landing, the examination of the baggage, the damp, noisy, strident wharf, the pushing and the strife were behind us, — too soon gone. Only this remained.

"You can give him your address," I said, stepping back.

"It is St. Rosa's Convent."

"Thank you." Even at that moment, her trust in me brought a little comfort.

"Do not worry. I shall be well taken care of."

"St. Rosa's Convent," I said loudly to the driver.

The moment had come. I had not realized what it would cost me. Before the finality of it, I stood, clutching the door, incapable of a word.

"God be with you," she said, bending forward.

"Bernoline — Bernoline, if ever —"

She leaned forward and, suddenly remembering, drew her veil. Our eyes met without wavering, unconscious of the crowd that jostled and shouted behind us. She raised her hand and touched my forehead.

"Thank you, from my heart. I shall keep you in my prayers, day and night — always, David."

She sank back, and I saw her face no more. A policeman shouted an angry order. The carriage moved away. At the window her hand fluttered in a last weak gesture. Then, even the window grew blank. I was alone, standing with head uncovered, in the midst of a group of urchins, who were mocking my long face.

PART III

PART III

I

THE rest is a blur. Clear and definite as is every moment from my first meeting with Bernoline to the last faint flutter of her white hand, the rest of the day is confused. There are hours which are lost, during which I do not know what I did or where I wandered. The great city roared about me. I walked interminable miles along dark, echoing side streets and into sudden flaming thoroughfares, where rapid crowds descended upon me like gusts of wind. I can remember the tap-tap of my cane along some stony solitude, and again standing at Times Square, in a wilderness of lights, roared at, amid the clanging and the honking of traffic; crowded, jostled, buffeted in the polygot stream, — a stranger in the land of his fathers.

Those crowds — those hostile, unintelligible crowds, so triumphantly successful — shall I ever forget them! I had known the monastic multitudes of Paris, slow-moving, reticent, respectful of the black-garbed mourners, compassionate and grim, hiding neither their sorrows nor their sympathy. I had known them and felt at home in them. But this other thing; this strident influx of strange tongues, this pagan riot, this shrill pursuit of pleasure, when all the world was hushed and apprehensive! What did they understand? What could they be made to understand? I stood, bewildered — I who had come for my American heritage — more alone, more distant than when in the long days of convalescence the dread feeling of homesickness gripped my heart.

If this were America, it was the America that Peter Magnus saw, polygot, cosmopolitan, international, an America that might be roaring on to some greater world-significance, but an America that had left me behind.

My room was on the eighteenth floor of a great hotel flung above the electric city. Below me swam the theatric night, the fluid effulgence of Broadway, the piping thrum of automobiles, the revelry ascending from flaring restaurants, carried upward into hanging gardens floating on the night, — nervous, shifting sheets of electric transparencies, fantastic, ingenious, unescapable, a million splendors to exalt a corset or a soap! What a vast, illuminated billboard! Everything oppressed me, the staggering scale of things, the importance of unimportant things, this capture of the night by the materialism of the day. I watched it, as one stands before the unleashed torrents of the sea and sky, overwhelmed with my own shrunk significance.

In the morning my first movement was to my window. The city of the night was fled. Below me lay a shanty civilization. The fairy splendor, the figment of the night had dissolved with the dawn. Broadway was but a huddled group of puny shanties, with skeleton trickeries exposed in the pitiless light of the day; ugly, visible, naked, — an adventuress stealing home at dawn, rouged, powdered and wan, and the pretentious jewels of the night showing themselves to be paste. The whole was stale as a ballroom when the laughter is fled. The crowded stars were empty sockets; the flaming palaces, scaffolding.

Homesickness? Yes, even in Picardy, even in the wet weariness of the trenches, in the gray rain that soaked into my soul, I had never felt such utter loneliness as here, in the nausea of the revealing dawn.

I came out of the city and set my face sternly to the task of readjustment. I would not be true to my determination to set down without disguise or sentimentalization the history of my shifting moods, actions and reactions, emotions and resolves, if I didn't write this down. No sooner had I entered the train, pulled my cap over my eyes and sunk back in my corner, than I fell into a mood of extreme weakness. As the instinct to live is stronger in the body, no matter what the will to die, so I believe that in the thinking man the will to continue as a free agent is an instinct deeper than our perceptions. Everything in me rebelled at the sudden subjection which a blind destiny had forced upon me. Something in me cried out imperiously:

"Forget! You must forget!"

And this is the hideous thing: the words of the other woman, the words of Letty, were the ones that sounded in my ears:

"Life is a succession of doors to be closed and never reopened."

To close the door and never to return! If it were possible!

I said to myself, incredulously, that it was not possible that in ten days I had come to a final and irrevocable love; that the romance and the glamor were for much, that the dramatic quality of the lone woman venturing into the wilderness of men, the mystery which enveloped her, had caught my sympathy. I did not attempt, it is true, to deceive myself into the belief that I did not love her, but I tried to convince myself that I could and must forget her.

Yet, even as rebelling against the cruelty of such destiny, I argued thus, I found myself comparing the women about me, the women there in the car, the women in the

crowds of New York, the women of the past I had known, to the Bernoline I loved, — and wondering where again in the empty world I would meet with another such. Suddenly, ahead of me in the far end of the car, a silhouette, the turn of the neck, a carriage of the head, reminded me so vividly of her that I sat bolt upright, staring, and so acute was the sense of her presence that though I knew it to be the wildest trick of fancy, I could not rest until I had risen and reassured myself. I returned and sank back heavily in my corner, no longer with strength or will to struggle against my fate.

The visible things receded, the unreal present dissolved. I abandoned myself to the unforgettable past. I lived again the hours since our meeting. I saw her, I heard her, I talked with her. I was back on the high forward deck, with the cliffs of New York growing into the night. I argued against her decision; I pleaded for us both. I said the things I should have said, as I reconstructed the inexorable past, until, struck by my own absurdity, I regained some measure of self-control.

After all, what remains? What can remain of this, the purest and deepest seeking of my life? I have dreamed a beautiful dream! The rest is a waking to the pain of reality.

Yet is it possible, I wonder, that for this ten days' dreaming the years of my life must pay the reckoning?

II

At South Norwalk I descended and took the train for Littledale. Hardly had I turned up the platform before I was among friends, welcomed with incredulous shouts:

Burke, the conductor, and Lannigan, of the express, smothering me with rapturous greetings. I rode back in the baggage car, the center of an admiring group. The old oil lamps still flickered overhead, undisturbed in their appointed task of gathering in the cobwebs, and for a while I forgot my loneliness in the warm pleasure of being back among my own kind. Heaven be thanked, nothing had changed! The baggage car still dates from 1870, wheezing and bumping over the narrow-gauge road as the old familiar figures gather about the stove in the solemnity of country-store conclave.

I had not thought to have such a thrill, yet a lump was in my throat when at the station old man Carpenter came hobbling up and a group of youngsters set up a cheer. It was no longer New York: it was my America, and I belonged to it.

I refused a trap and set out on foot, after cautioning them against telephoning my arrival. Hardly five years were gone, yet every detail of the green and white village was so definite in my memory that I noted with an intolerant resentment the new porch at Hamill's and the glass front which had arrived at Sherwood's corner grocery. All my boyhood was about me as I hurried on under the vaulted elms: Parson Miller's home, where Ben and I had strung a tick-tack; the green picket fence where the fox terrier came fearfully out when we rattled our sticks; the side street where I had fought M'Ginnis; the hideous soldiers' monument, where the snowball fights raged; the stone bridge to which I used to steal after supper to meet Jenny. The past lay at my side, — tranquil, unchanging, and undisturbed by the currents that whirled and struggled three thousand miles away, and in that moment I, too, felt a leaping joy in my heart to be in this America which had stood still in the breathless rush of things.

The lights were in the windows of the great hall as I turned the postern and came up the deep well of the evergreens, towards the low, rambling, red house that sat at the feet of the three drooping elms. I came slowly across the white hoar frost which coated the lawn, and the stiff gravel crackled as I stood under the *porte-cochère*, undecided, fearful of what I should find, steeling myself against the shock of disillusionment, and in my heart the cold repugnance of that one dreaded confrontation, — Letty, at the side of Ben. Yet, despite doubt and shrinking, I think that in my heart the deepest sentiment was a weak gladness to leave all the world behind and come back, as a tired boy comes back, into that sheltered warmth which is called home.

As I debated, with a sudden scurry and barking defiance, the dogs came tumbling over each other, — and the next moment old Dan was in my arms, while the two younger dogs, accepting me on faith, set up a furious chatter. Then, a rush of feet across the hall, the door flung open, and something soft and fluttering leaped to my neck; — home was a reality and Molly was crying my name! It was no longer the laughing tomboy of the bobbed hair and short skirts, but a woman whose eyes were on a level with mine. I took her by the shoulders and held her from me fiercely, and then caught her to me once more with a great thankfulness, for the eyes were straight and clear and the heart was the heart of my little sister.

My mother ran out, and it gave me a great thrill to see her face, for we had always stood in awe of her, — of her austerity, her brilliance and her measured mentality. To us she had always been one on whose public services we children should never intrude. I think she must have pictured me as stricken or mutilated, for I shall never forget the first incredulous look on her face

as she saw me, and then — the burst of tears. In all my life, in stress and disaster, I never remember to have seen her show such emotion.

"Be careful, with the Governor," Molly whispered. "Don't seem surprised. He's in there."

He was in the dusky library, sunk in a great leather chair, a drop-light at his side, and I noticed at once how thin and loose was the hand that lay on the magazine.

"Hello, Governor," I said. "Dropped in to see you."

He put out his hand and felt of me. He was gray, and the red blood had run from his face and left feeble veins under the drawn skin. The watery eyes came unsteadily up to mine and passed on to the faces of my mother and Molly, in a silent, terrifying interrogation. I guessed what was in his mind, even before he said, —

"Then, it's closer than I thought."

The mater stood it without flinching, but Molly swayed and went suddenly out of the room.

"Not much, Governor," I said, in bluff cheerfulness. "We're a tough lot. They tried hard to get me, but they couldn't. Don't get any such nonsense in your head. I came home because the doctors insisted upon my being fattened up before they'd let me back. Two months' furlough."

His fingers had closed over my wrist and, still holding it, he motioned me to be seated.

"Glad you're here, Davy."

"And lots to tell you, Governor. I've good news for you."

"Alan?"

Now, the Governor had never been as quick as that, and I ascribe it to the uncanny prescience which comes to the very sick.

"Yes — Alan." I drew out the cross from my pocket and laid it before him.

"Governor, you don't need to be ashamed of Alan. He sent that to you, and told me to tell you how he'd won it."

He looked up quickly at the mater, and his lip trembled so that we hurriedly changed the subject. I left him presently, with a promise to return, and went out into the hall, where Molly's hand slid into mine.

"Aunt Janie?"

"Upstairs."

"You expected me?"

"Mr. Brinsmade telephoned."

"Who's here?" I said suddenly. "Ben?"

"No. They're coming at the end of the week."

This news took a sudden dread from my heart. For that night, the night of my home-coming, I would not have to face that!

The very old change little. Aunt Janie was the same fairy godmother that I remember as a mischievous youngster: tall, thin, a little stooped, soft-voiced, gentle, living in a more measured age, aloof from the momentum of the present. Strange, silent, devoted soul: she had come into the home, asking of life only the opportunity of serving others! She had brought us up, run the house, planted the trees which had grown to stature and let the rest of the world pass her by, faithful to the one and only love of her life, the memory of the Captain of the —th Massachusetts who had died at Antietam. His sword hangs above the fireplace and his portrait is in the locket at her throat. Each night, after the rest of the house has retired, she descends and closes the doors, examines the windows, ushers the dogs into the back hall, and extinguishes the lights. Nothing has ever been able to dissuade her from this last responsibility. We argued with her, we implored her, and, finally, we came to

accept with a feeling of restful gratitude the sound of her slippered step up the stairs, ushering in the night.

I am always to her about twelve years old and, I think, her favorite.

"I have prayed for you every night, Davy," she said, when I put my arm around her. "*You've* come back."

Possibly she had been dreaming by the fire of the other, who had not returned. I sat there, trying to answer her questions and finding it difficult. It is not easy to talk about the war. The point of view is so different. All that I have lived has been so inevitable, so part of the instincts of the man who fights, that I find it hard to comprehend the curiosity of those who look on it from the outside. To me still it is this other life that is incomprehensible and chaotic, and profoundly disturbing. When men must fight, it is better to forget. — With all the home memories thronging about me, sitting there with Aunt Janie's hand in mine, I was thinking but one thing.

"In two months I shall return to it — the grim gamble — where those who stake their lives must lose in the end inevitably, — as all gamblers do."

III

THE next night Molly and I drove over to the Brinsmades'. Anne had been insistently in my thoughts all day. All my revolt from the dead weight of emptiness in life was instinctively towards her. Yet I can hardly explain to myself now the strangeness of my conduct, once in her presence, nor the motive that prompted me deliberately to wound her, as though I were seeking once for all to reject her from my life. Was it some

savage instinct of honesty towards her, or a strange unhuman bitterness that entered my soul, — a resentment for the thing offered against the thing denied? I do not know. I cannot yet see clearly.

Yet I do know that I came there eagerly, with a great need of the affection of my old playmate. For what Bernoline had waked in me, the discovery of the harmonious companionship of a true woman, had left me with a new feeling of dependence. Perhaps, also, in the years of absence, I had idealized my very human little friend.

I do not know if such contradictory impulses are true to others or only to me. I imagine that few persons would understand me. Yet it is true that in the desolate loneliness against which I was struggling, I longed to find in some one, some one known and kind, some measure of that deep womanhood of the Bernoline who had gone.

When we arrived the dance was in full swing. I stood staring, unable to adjust myself to the carnival note. For months I had not looked on such a scene. For months I had forgotten the existence of this world, where color fired the imagination and music awoke disturbing needs of pleasure. Anne hurried forward, we shook hands, and — a sudden shyness came between us. Others crowded up, an old friend or two, chance acquaintances; an indiscriminate, curious crowd that, to my annoyance, insisted on treating me as a hero. I resented it all. The men offended me. I forgot I had once been like them. How unrelated to actualities they were, these men, mostly of my generation, of the generation of wasted opportunities, well-set-up, pleasing, clean-cut, but so untested, so devoid of the stamp of leadership. What could they know of the realities that were gathering on the horizon? The

sobered France of Bernoline lay outside. Light and shadow, I thought. Half the world dancing, while the other half staggers through the night!

Then I thought of the leaping call to duty which, in the coming day, would startle them in the midst of their playtime. And, knowing what I know, the irony of it all stood out. How little they could divine the future or what the immutable, slow-moving course of little things could mean to each.

"My generation is the tragic generation," De Saint Omer had often said to me. Would this, too, be our tragic generation, — a generation brought up only to play, to enjoy life gluttonously, to pursue pleasure riotously — abruptly halted in the full of the revelry and summoned to face the recurring test of the ages?

I dare say the mood was morbid and my own mental condition was accountable for much in it. Yet there was cause for irritation. My ears were filled with the chatter of silliness. I was paraded for the curiosity of empty-headed girls, outrageously décolleté and bejeweled. Had I been afraid? Wouldn't I please tell them about the atrocities? Had I really killed a man? What did it feel like? What sort of uniform did I wear? Was it attractive?

One disappointed young lady exclaimed:

"Oh, dear! Then you're not an aviator. I'm just crazy to have one of those dinky little caps!"

Molly, who divined my irritation, saved the situation by drawing me away into the library, where I shook hands with Mr. Brinsmade, and presently, ashamed of my too evident ill-humor, I returned to the ballroom.

I was a little hurt, too, that Anne had not made more of my coming. I remembered her diffidence, her quick

yielding to others who pressed around her, and I asked myself moodily the reason for this attitude. Was it the memory of old days, of certain things half expressed in her letters? Had her father spoken to her as he had to me? Did she expect that I would assume any rights over her? This last thought increased my irritation. I stood at the door of the conservatory, watching her as she danced.

It was not the Anne that I remembered. There was a finished charm about all she did, a grace of conscious assurance, a sure sense of her own value, that for some reason offended me. She was no longer an impulsive girl, but a brilliant and confident woman. From the tumult of her golden hair to the decolleté of her black jet gown, that revealed too boldly the lithe and graceful lines of her body; in the ready smile of attention, to the eyes which had the fevered sense of pleasure, she was one of them, — of a vapid, inconsequential society which, that night, offended every instinct in me.

"And the worst is, she feeds upon it," I said to myself gloomily.

When the dance ended, she came directly to me, smiling and confident. I was quite at a loss to account for the sudden antagonism which came over me.

"I've saved this dance: it's yours, Davy. If you'll ask me?"

"I've forgotten how," I said shortly, and with very bad grace. "Besides, after all this while, we might have something to say to each other."

Now, this was not only ill-humored, but unjustified. She looked at me quickly and then, with a glance down the conservatory: "There's a corner. Let's sit it out, then?"

A little remorseful, I gave her my arm, saying:

"First I want to thank you for your letters. They meant a lot."

She did not answer, suddenly serious, wondering, perhaps, at my mood. When we had come to our corner she turned and faced me.

"You have changed, Davy."

"And I don't think I should have known you." She looked at me so quickly that I added, "You see — I am dazzled."

"You do not approve?"

The truth is that I did not quite approve, and her question threw me off my guard. She must have read in my eyes, for such a hurt look came to the corners of her lips that I repeated hastily:

"My dear Anne, I am dazzled. Just think; I have come out of a gray world, and I am still blinking with astonishment. I can't quite get used to it. You women are different from the women over there — more feminine, perhaps — but you represent something I had forgotten. Don't pay any attention to me. I'm an old bear who comes to you, grumbling, out of the wet and the mud."

"I see," she said, and then, "but I do pay attention to what you say, so please be frank, as you always were, Davy."

"I don't think you would understand," I began and then, struck by the absurdity of it, I broke into a laugh. "After all, it isn't the slightest business of mine."

"Am I any different from the rest?"

I looked into the dancing crowd.

"No, of course not."

"Well — then?"

"Anne, you will not understand in the least; you probably will be offended, but, since you ask, I will tell you."

But there I stopped.

"So, you're not going to tell me?"

"No. Besides, it is a question of a point of view."

"I wonder what you really think of me, Davy?" she said, puzzled. "Is it such a very bad opinion?"

"It is not your fault. It is the whole system," I blurted out, led on by my growing irritation; the feeling, perhaps, of the quality of girlhood that should be there and was now gone; the eyes that had seen too much, the ears that had heard too much, the woman who knew too well her worth in the eyes of men. Perhaps it was because I needed to see her differently that I felt so strongly. "It's you who are defrauded. There are bigger things in our women than just the pursuit of pleasure. However," I broke off, with a sudden laugh, "I am just as absurd to be talking to you like this!"

"I wanted to go over there and nurse," she said, looking down. "Heavens, don't you think I'm tired of this sort of life!"

"I wonder just how sincere that is," I said, watching her with amusement. "Service, or — adventure?"

She sat up, suddenly frowning.

"You will go back?"

"Of course."

Suddenly a recollection smote me.

"My dear Anne, don't mind me to-night. I dare say I'm unjust, but I'm living in another world, and this shocks me — the incomprehension of it all! Are these really men and women, and do they think war is a vaudeville show? Yes, I am out of temper; but if you'd heard the questions I've been asked! I beg your pardon. You were very good to write me all the time: it meant a lot, too."

She looked up, so happily, that I began to reproach myself for my boorishness.

"What is it you don't like in me?"

"I should like to see you — you and Molly — in the blue and white of the Red Cross, with big square hob-nailed boots, splashing around in the mud and rain, with smirches on your dainty noses!"

I had hurt her, despite my assumed levity, and I knew it. Some one came up to claim a dance, and she rose quickly, both of us glad of the interruption. The rest of the evening I spent with Mr. Brinsmade, discussing politics. Now that I write it, I am sorry that I acted as I did. Yet I am at a loss to know why.

IV

I HAVE seen Letty. I had steeled myself against the meeting, with a cold, panicky dread. Yet, when the actual test came, I was amazed at my self-possession. The inevitable thing is, after all, the easiest thing to do. It was so, I remember, with my first test in battle, the question of courage, which had so tortured my imagination, clarified itself with the first command. I answered it, as others did, because, I think, there was no choice.

So, the moment that the crisis arose, I knew it would have to be gone through, — that I would have to meet her eyes and his without a false movement. It had to be done, and I did it, as calmly and as naturally as though I had lied all my life. And yet, there was one awful moment for me, — and for her, too.

They had motored over for luncheon and I knew that they would arrive about one o'clock. I debated and made a dozen decisions, changing them immediately. I would wait until all the company was assembled and meet them in the confusion of the crowd. I even con-

templated a morning canter, timing my ride so as to meet them on my return, and obtain some clue of the exact situation in the advantage of the hasty informality. For I felt a cold dread of the test. What had she told him? Was I to act as a chance acquaintance, or as an old friend? If I pretended ignorance, my attitude might rouse his suspicions immediately. Yet if I called her by her first name and showed the knowledge of an intimate, I might precipitate a dangerous situation. I must take my cue from her, holding myself alertly on my guard.

At the last moment, at the sound of their entering the driveway, I did the thing I had not even considered. I went out on the porch and stood forth openly to greet them, curiously calm and ready for any turn, now that it was a question of danger. Yet I loathed the dissimulation I could not escape. The next instants seemed leaden. The car drove up. I looked at Ben, steadily, controlling my glance. Fortunately, he was nearest to me.

"Hello, there, old fellow!"

"Hello, Ben," I said, in my heart a great thankfulness.

"*Bon jour, Monsieur,* my brother-in-law; you have not forgotten me?"

I looked. I had to look. Letty's shadowy eyes — calm, even a trifle amused — were on me, and no more trace of emotion than was in her voice.

"The idea! But I did not expect to meet you again like this," I heard myself saying, with all the banality of an accomplished society fop. Had there been a look of fear or distress in her eyes I might have faltered, but the self-possession roused my anger and that carried me through. I took the gloved hand (thank heaven it *was* gloved) and forced some sort of a smile to my face. Fortunately the others ran out, and the first test was over.

Luncheon ended, after coffee in the conservatory, Ben said:

"Davy, let's take a tramp around the duck pond. There are some things I want to talk over with you."

I rose and I know that my heart leaped. I saw Letty's little fingers work slowly up the arms of her chair and her shoulders stiffen. That was all; but I, who knew Letty, knew what terror was beneath.

We bundled up and went out over the hard ground, and, as we turned the conservatory, I saw that Letty had taken up a position by the window. I did not dare look at her, for my own heart within me stood still, while I waited his first words. Everything required me to make some reference to his wife, and yet I could not do it. My tongue refused to move.

"The mater does not like my marriage, Davy," he said finally, after he had waited for me to begin the conversation. "Oh, it's nothing open; she's too loyal for that, you know; but of course, their worlds are absolutely different. Still, I feel it, and I know that Letty feels it."

"Yes, I suppose that would be so," I said, forced to answer.

Again, he seemed to wait for something I should say and when I remained silent, he dropped into a silence, too. Presently, he began to whistle to himself, and so we came to the duck pond. The cabin we had built as children still stood, sagging and covered with moss.

"I can't get Rossie out of my mind," I said suddenly. "Remember the day he stepped into the hornet's nest and had to dive into the pond?"

We stood on the rustic bridge, leaning over the rail, the white, solemn ducks waddling below us.

"Davy, will you answer me a direct question?"

I felt the moment approaching.

"Fire away."

"Did you ever write back anything against Letty to the family?"

"What!"

He repeated the question, while for me the tension relaxed. Still, this might be only a preliminary.

"Ben, I have never written a word home mentioning your wife one way or the other."

"You knew her well in Paris, didn't you?"

"We were in the same crowd, yes."

"Weren't you a little bit in love with her at one time?"

"Frankly, yes; we all were."

I had given my answers readily, for each question I had foreseen.

"Do you know, Davy," he said, looking me in the face, "that I am beginning to think that you, too, do not approve."

"That's a hard question to answer, but since you've put it, — here goes. There's been something closer between us, Ben, than other brothers. I think I would make any sacrifice for you and your happiness. I'm not thinking of Letty; I'm thinking of you. I know her world and I know yours. Her world is a world that takes everything lightly and is not bruised by disillusionments. You are different. If you should be unhappy, it would break you."

"You don't know her as I know her," he broke in.

"No — of course not." For a moment the hideous irony of it escaped me. Had it been any other man, I would have been willing to convince myself that Letty, like a thousand other women of her class, was capable, once her love awakened, of absolute loyalty and devotion. But did she really love him, beyond a caprice of the emotions? That was what I did not know.

"Ben, you know that I am always loyal, no matter what

happens. If it were a question of your good, old fellow, I would give my right arm."

I held out my hand, and waited. If he could not bring himself to take it — but he did — though after some hesitation! The first test, thank God, was over. He could not have suspected and done that!

What had we said to each other? What could I have said differently? I was caught in the iron grip of circumstance, and every word was dictated to me. I knew my brother, and I was afraid, — coldly, mortally afraid. Such men are capable of murder.

Then I told him of Bernoline. Some instinct warned me to do so, and the way his face cleared and the old affection returned confirmed my suspicions. Beneath all he had said (or not said) was something brooding. Only, in that case, the situation was more than ever fraught with danger.

We went back over the old days, when we four were the Littledale boys, — Big Dale, Little Dale, Tiny Dale, and Rossie, who was no Dale at all. With the clearing vista of years, I saw my brother as he was, and I was astonished to find in my new estimate a sense of personal superiority. He felt it, too, for once or twice he said something which showed me that he had a feeling of having stood still.

I told him of having seen Alan.

"I never liked him," he said, without compromise, "and there's no use pretending; but I'm glad he made good." He turned to me, laying his hand on my arm for the first time. "Davy, there's not been much luck in the family, has there? We're out of existence — shot to pieces. And the other time doesn't seem so very far ago, — the time when we romped and played like good, wholesome puppies. Rossie gone — Alan drifting about the world

— you crawling back by the skin of your teeth — I suppose there's no use arguing with you about your going back?"

"None."

"Well, if we don't wake up and get into it, I'm going, myself," he blurted out. "The mater, of course, is all for pacifism, but as for the Governor, I believe he's just hanging on until we declare war."

"I believe so, too."

"Must seem strange to you, here."

"Yes — strange."

We each wished the interview over, I felt. With all our attempts at restoring the old intimacy, there was a constraint on us we couldn't shake off.

The first thing I saw, as we went back, was Letty's face at the window of the conservatory. It was only a look, for she rose immediately and shifted her seat, but that look I shall never efface from my memory. She was no coward. Indeed, I have never known any woman with more of the reckless, devil-may-care attitude towards danger, but that vital hour, when she sat there and wondered, must have tried her soul.

When we entered she was consummately at ease. She did not appear to notice our coming, but once I caught her glancing furtively in the mirror, watching Ben.

I went on upstairs and there, in the old playroom, the tension I had been under snapped and my nerves went bad and, as I was doubled up, shivering and shaking, Molly found me. It must have frightened her out of her wits, to come upon me without warning, for by the time the spell was over, she was in my arms, weeping her heart out.

"Oh, Davy, you aren't going back, like that!"

"Nonsense! It's almost over — only, once in a while — when something excites me."

"You've been talking to Ben," she said, straightening up. "Davy, I don't *like* her! And, what's more, Ben isn't happy!"

What could I say? I couldn't look into my dear little sister's clean eyes and counsel her to accept Letty with an open heart.

I went back presently and joined the company. I knew that in public I must pay my brother's wife some attention. To avoid her would be confession. She had quite recovered by this time and was her own malicious self again.

"Do you know, David, that you have neglected me shamefully?" she said aloud. "You were more gallant in Paris."

I made some lame excuse. I do not remember what I muttered and, avoiding any intimacy, turned the conversation to common acquaintances. I cannot remember a more hideously disagreeable hour in all my life. Not that there was left any flicker of the old infatuation. The image of Bernoline had cleansed the old fever. I looked at Letty and, looking at her, wondered that I could meet her eyes without a tremor. She felt this, I know, and did not like the sensation for, despite the danger of the situation, her voice at times took on the old caressing tone and her eyes sparkled with the desire to entice. Our conversation was necessarily banal in the presence of others. It was not until they started to go that I found myself alone with her on the porch.

"I hope to God you did it because you love him," I said, without premeditation.

"And if there was any other reason, Davy?" she said softly.

"He is quite capable of killing you. I give you a solemn warning."

Her fur slipped to the ground and, as I recovered it, she said aloud:

"Thank you, my brother-in-law — and you will be sociable, and run over?"

Ben had come up as we were speaking, but her quick ear had detected his approach.

The interview has left me quite in the dark. Why had she done it? Is she in love with Ben? Is there any change in the inner woman? Can she be held wholly and loyally by a man with whom she cannot trifle, before whom she is genuinely afraid? Was it the dramatic revenge that tempted her? Or was it just the instinct of social self-preservation, the fetich of that great god, Respectability, which dominates all such women? For, protest as they may, no matter how they rage against conventionalities, flout them openly or secretly, in the heart of each lawless woman, whether her situation be sheltered or ruthlessly exposed, is the slumbering veneration of the thing called respectability. Once passed the thirties, it becomes an obsession. Perhaps, after all, it was the safe haven of respectability that Letty sought, at the end of a few adventurous years. Perhaps, it was a combination of all these motives. But, of one thing I am certain, — Letty is afraid of her husband.

V

December

My first Sunday has come and gone. All day I have been looking at myself and at my home with a new revela-

tion of values. Strangely enough, I never before perceived its significance. France and another civilization have suddenly thrown it into a clearer relief, and all the while the words of Bernoline return to my memory. What a contrast!

At eleven o'clock we departed to Sunday worship: Ben and my mother to the Unitarian Church; Aunt Janie to the Congregational, with father; and Molly and myself to a Presbyterian service, accompanied by the servants. No scene is more typical of what we are: a group of individualists bound together by mutual tolerance. Are we a home, I wonder, or simply a shelter over a group of lodgers for this night or for many nights? Of course, it is not fair to take us as typical of America. Yet we are typical of one thing, — a developed type of traditional New England. This morning, as I sat in the old pew, with Molly by my side, I thought with a little tightening of my heart that even in the coming days of suspense when I go back to the front my family will not be even united in its sorrow.

The whole contrast between our two civilizations, French and American, is here, — in the family. Thinking on this to-night, I understand Bernoline better. The sense of duty that dominates her life and makes sacrifice so easily possible is the sense of family solidarity. Love of the mother, respect for the authority of the father, companionship with the children, — it is a France in miniature, and that greater love of country is but a tradition of family pride.

I do not think we have this strongly disciplined sense of duty nor this unquestioning acceptance of sacrifice. How often children are but accidents and sometimes strangers under the same roof. In my own case, what is my father to me? Do I know him as well as I know

the boy I roomed with at school, I wonder? There is hardly an opinion we share or an outlook on life which we could understand together. He has never really discussed anything with me, as though instinctively he divined I would take an opposite view.

I don't say what should be. Yet to-night, perhaps because the sense of loss of a dear and necessary presence accents my own loneliness, I can visualize another type of home — the home of Bernoline — and wonder . . . After all, there is something that touches the heart strings in the thought of the generations succeeding each other, standing for the same ideal of conduct, the same loyalty to a conception of state and faith, passing down the same standard from father and son and guarding it in reverence! Governments change as I change my hat; waves of paganism, materialism and doubt come and pass; but so long as the family faith is untouched, France will be found equal to its past. Order, stability, discipline, — the sunken cornerstone of the national consciousness are all in this conception, and I think to understand this is to understand why there was no miracle in France's answer in the month of August, 1914.

Yet, I have no doubt now of America's answer when the call is clear: only we will respond from different motives. If the sense of duty is not developed here by old traditions, there is a man's pride in doing what free men should do. It will be a great voluntary impulse, something that has come down to us from our strong, free, battling ancestors of Jutland, of those who sang of heroic deaths and defied the tempest and the perils of the forest, who never bowed to king or conqueror, — the fierce dissenting strain of Saxon manhood. I am not afraid of this heritage when stirred by the test of war; — but in peace?

What is the basic impulse, then, that moves through our Anglo-Saxon civilization? It is the relation between man and woman, and this conception of love as heroic is of the origins of our race. Christianity did not exalt women with us. In the days of the Berserkers and the sea-rovers, man and woman clove together in single partnership and kept their faith. So, to-day, the children in the house are but waiting the touch of destiny, free agents, held by no family tradition, impatient for life to open to them. Under all the sentimentalism of our literature and art there is this abiding instinct, the need of love that shall come as a directing purpose. Each child, in the imagination of boy or girl, holds it as his right to give his heart where it pleases him, no matter what the wrench or what the sacrifice, as the beginning and the meaning of life. In this instinct to determine our own existence as children in our father's house, we remain fierce and rebellious, as our Saxon heroes who served, but feared neither their gods nor their masters. We do not inherit our homes: we create them.

My little sister, who hangs on my arm and comes to me with her confidences, knows deep in her heart that this is not her home. To-morrow she will look in the eyes of some stranger and, despite all our entreaties, pleadings, warnings, put her hand in his and follow him into the outer world. No wonder that we have colonized the earth, when each of us has in him the soul of the pioneer! And now that I have written this, I think I understand why I cannot do what would be so easy for a Latin to do. Marriage to us is not a formula, but a need of our hidden spiritual self, the meaning of our existence. No, I can never turn to Anne with a divided memory, not even in the instinct of self-preservation!

Everything separates me from Bernoline. In our basic conceptions of life, she in her clear outlook of faith, and I in my driven questionings; she in her unquestioned acceptance of duty; I in my rebellion against aught which means the immolation of self on the altar of convention. We are as distant as though she stood at the threshold of a hundred years and I at the close. A civilization and an age intervene between us. Yet why, knowing this, despite instinct and will, have we been powerless to turn away? Is it, I wonder, because the thing is so utterly hopeless, forbidden, destructive, that the instinct of Eden draws us irresistibly to our destiny?

Yesterday I read in Maeterlinck's "Life of The Bee" that strange and terrible chapter of the Nuptial Flight, which in its fearful mystery of love and death reveals to us the mysterious origin in nature's purpose of our human seeking. How little we foresee in the first quickening ecstasy of our beings the destiny of tragedy towards which we move! How little, in that one clear, untroubled afternoon, when all the beating frenzy in me grew still and peaceful with the knowledge that I was loved, did I divine that the rapture which held me was but the prelude to life denied and the ache of happiness remembered. Mystery of good and evil! How often this thought returns across the vista of my life!

The thing I cannot struggle against is silence, — this blank wall of silence that I cannot seize and yet which fastens about me and shuts out all hope. If I could but see her, talk to her, write to her! But between that and nothingness is my promise. Yesterday, in my loneliness and rebellion, I wrote her, — a wild, incoherent letter, imploring her to release me of a promise beyond my strength to keep. I sealed it and addressed it, refusing to listen to anything but the fever and the revolt that

burned through every fiber of my being. I rushed out of the house and down to the village, with only one thought, — to end the suspense, to be done with my conscience by an irrevocable act. And then I came back, slowly, with lagging steps, beaten, the letter destroyed. Why? Because, in all the checkered path of my life, there is one memory inviolate. No matter what I have done, and bitterly regretted; no matter what I may come to in some middle-aged sophistry, — I once have reached an ideal of myself. This ideal that she, Bernoline, created of me can never be lowered. Whatever in its tyranny this memory demands of me, I shall in the end obey.

VI

I REMEMBER an incident in my boyhood. A little Airedale called Frazzles had become so wild that a conference of the powers had decided on sending her away to a veterinary. The sentence was duly carried out, and Frazzles was deported in the last days of autumn, while we children howled our grief in the nursery. The next we heard of her, she had escaped and taken to the woods some twenty miles away, where she was living like a wild animal. The winter passed and then the spring, and one day Frazzles came, scratching at the door, weary, savage, and caked with mud. The door opened, she flew to her old post under the blue sofa by the fireplace. Six months had passed, — outcast from home and humanity, yet, at the hour when the tea-cakes were brought in, she crept out of her hiding place and lay at the feet of Aunt Janie, just as though it were yesterday.

At times I feel strangely akin to that little bedraggled outcast. I have fallen back so easily into the familiar

routine that all the other life seems incredible. Have I ever really lived in the wet and slime of the trenches, pillowed on a foul blanket; and is it possible that in a few short weeks the moving finger of fate will return and touch me over again? It is so far off, so obscure, fainter than a dying echo; only the memory of Bernoline is vivid and acute with the power to pain.

Against this memory I struggle day and night. There are times when I combat it fiercely in the instinct of self-preservation, when I try to reach down into my heart and tear out the thing that aches. At others, I yield to a fool's paradise and delude myself with impossible solutions that deceive me but for an hour.

Yesterday, in my desperation, I went over to the Brinsmades'. I went, deliberately, to see Anne. Why, I do not know. For Anne, I think, loves me, and, despite all my reason, all my will to escape from my destiny, I do not, I cannot love her as she deserves to be loved. Perhaps, if I had not met Bernoline —

I went, hesitating and undecided. I came away convinced. Whatever comes, I care this much for my boyhood's companion; I shall never come to her with a memory between us.

It was a morning when Bernoline's presence had been so acutely near me that there was no escape from the blank impossibility of the future. Did I go to seek some strange, healing comfort in the knowledge of another's suffering, — even as I suffered without possibility of hope? The instinct of love is, I suppose, so fiercely primitive in us that under its tyranny we are subjected to some moral atavism. All the primitive passions that have swayed us from the dawn of time are suddenly let loose and, with the leaping impulse towards possession, comes the instinct to hate violently or to

desire fiercely the joy that comes from the feeling of being able to cause pain, to turn against another all that we suffer from the one we love. Girl or courtesan, I have seen women pour out treasures of sacrifice to one man and at the same time show themselves savagely, incomprehensibly pitiless to an unwelcome lover.

Not that all this was in my thought. Far from it. I went, brooding and restless, without impulse but to escape from myself. I drove over after luncheon, after telephoning my coming.

She came down immediately and at my first look I felt a guilty feeling, yet one of some compensating happiness.

"There's a house party, but I got rid of them," she said, giving me both her hands. "Do you know, Davy, you have waited a long, long time to come."

"I have wanted to, many times."

"Really, and honestly?" she said, looking me in the eyes.

"Of course."

My heart smote me as I met her glance. One word from me had brought back the comrade of other days. From her hair to the stout walking boots, all artifice had been so evidently offered up on the altar of my criticism that I could not help saying:

"Now I remember an old friend."

She laughed at this and her eyes sparkled, but there was a retort on her tongue.

"It's quite hopeless to try and please you, — and I who fondly believed I was going to make such an impression on you with my grand manner!"

"Now, Miss Flattery, you don't take me in like that. There were others present, and — you didn't know I was coming."

"Father told me," she said abruptly. "Let's get out of this hothouse atmosphere. How about a ramble into the glen? There's not enough snow to bother us. Shall we?"

"Agreed."

Well bundled up, we struck out over the frozen swamps for the solitudes of the hills, and as we went a curious diffidence fell between us.

"David, it's you who are the stranger," she said suddenly. "You are changed, much changed."

"In what way?"

"Your eyes are terribly critical of things you don't like. You — you rather intimidate me. Please be a little kind in your judgments."

"I am not aware — "

"Yes, you have changed. Before, I often wondered how you would turn out — you might have gone so many ways. You have been tested and you have found yourself. Only, Davy, in finding yourself, I think you have forgotten a little the way you have gone and are apt to be without much indulgence towards others."

Now, the directness of this analysis and its point quite startled me.

"Do you think I am like that?" I said, wondering.

She nodded decisively, twice.

"And dreadfully direct. You can't conceal what you feel."

A memory returned, and, also, a possible explanation.

"What I said that first night hurt you?"

"Terribly."

"You attach too much importance to a chance remark."

"Don't."

I stopped short in my lumbering explanation.

"Don't talk to me like that," she said, looking at me with a little frown above her eyes. "Davy, in the old

days there was nothing but absolute honesty between us — no nonsense. I have known many men since you went; naturally, some who attracted me, — one or two, very much — "

"Naturally," I said, but, to my surprise, with a certain instinctive resentment.

"But no one else to whom I could talk, frankly and openly, as I always did with you. Don't change that, because" — she hesitated — "because, Davy, you can help me to see clearer in many ways, and — and I shall always be to you the one person to whom you can tell anything. Davy, memories, the real memories, I think, are the things to hold on to in this world."

Her words went through me like a knife, so near were they to my own fate. It was all that I could do to fight back the telltale moodiness I felt rising in my face, for I knew her eyes were on me.

"I really need to talk to you, Davy," she said, when I did not answer, and there was such a plaintive note in her voice that, to cover my unease, I held out my hand and said with an appearance of bluffness:

"All right: the old alliance is renewed."

"Absolute honesty?"

"So help me."

"Then — you were disappointed when you saw me again?"

"Yes."

"You thought I had become superficial, vacillating?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am," she said, to my surprise. "I didn't know it. You gave me a shock, but you made me realize it. You still think so?"

"My dear Anne," I said carefully. "How can you be otherwise? Everything is against you. What in life is real to you, except pleasure? You've been shown noth-

ing else in life — granted it isn't your fault. You have been cheated out of something bigger. Other women will never notice it; thank heaven, you do. Now, to explain what I felt on coming back out of the other world. Before, I don't suppose it ever would have occurred to me. I took the American man's point of view — from the best of motives, I grant you — our attitude of chivalry towards you. But, over there, something else has come to us, a bigger conception of you, an ideal of service. That is the difference in point of view."

"But what am I to do?" she said, shrinking under the directness of the opinion she had invited.

"Heavens, you're making me talk like a confounded, self-righteous prig," I exclaimed, with a sudden realization, "and God knows I'm far from that."

"No, no! Say what you mean. You, you do not quite trust my sincerity, do you?"

"Not quite."

"Why?"

"Because, well, because I think you are inclined to dramatize your moods," I said lightly. "I think you are colored by the wish to please whomever you happen to be with. We all are. But I wonder if to-night, when the guests, the dreadful guests who bore you so, return, you will find time so heavy on your hands?"

"For heaven's sake, don't *laugh* at me!" she cried, flaring up with more show of feeling than I had seen.

"Forgive me. I won't do that again," I said contritely. "Do you really care what I think?"

"You know I do."

Her answer left me awkwardly floundering, until suddenly she burst out:

"All you say is true: I do change, I do drift; what I feel is true one moment will be different the next. But, Davy, I realize it! Do you think I want to go on this

way? I do what I do because I am restless, just — just to do something. You think I am superficial: I am, horribly so. You think I crave pleasure — excitement: I do. You think I like to play with emotions: I do. All that's true, and I know it."

"I wonder if you know what harm you do?" I said, not quite convinced.

"What do you mean?"

"Anne, I sometimes think good women do more harm in this world than bad. They, poor devils, do so little harm: they are so obvious. A moment's madness, and we throw ourselves violently back from them. To leave them is to forget them. But you — you others — the pain you inflict is given unconsciously."

"It doesn't last," she said.

"How do you know? Tell me one thing, Anne, because it has always interested me. You didn't need to tell me there had been many men in your life: have you ever felt any responsibility toward them? I mean this: have you ever stopped to question your right to attract them, to awaken their love, even when you knew there was no interest on your part?"

"Why, no, of course not."

"Probably not; such things are unconscious — an instinct. And of a dozen men who come to love you, eight or ten forget quickly. But some don't, do they?"

"No, that's true."

"That's what I mean by the harm good women do, unconsciously. You would not give pain willingly, I am sure, and yet I doubt if even you realize the sorrow that has come from you. You may say it's all in the game. It is: but I go back to what I said — that often a girl like yourself, like Molly, with everything to charm and attract, leaves wounds behind that it takes years to heal. That's the strange thing about it; a friendship

that is precious in the life of both, inevitably, by some hidden spark of impulse, a sudden need of the soul, is transformed into love on the part of one. Then, what happens? Not only is the friendship taken out of the lives of both, but to one that first joy of human contact becomes emptiness and bitterness. It is not only of you I am thinking, but of my own sister. When I saw Molly again, so radiant, so lovely in her unconscious youth, so eager for life to begin, I could not help thinking that wherever she went, so lightly and so joyfully, she would leave behind her many bruises and aches. Then, a few real men will come to love her profoundly, and without hope, and know the daily, hourly slavery to a hopeless longing."

"It is of yourself you are talking now, Davy?"

I stopped, thunderstruck. In my earnestness I had quite forgotten how much my own personal feelings must have given warmth to my statement.

"Of course, I did not expect that in all this time you wouldn't have fallen in love," she said. She stood, looking down. "It's a queer world." The next moment she had started up the ravine, swinging from rock to rock, with a challenge to me to follow. I hurried after her, vexed at my own indiscreet revelations and seriously alarmed at her reckless flight.

"Be careful. You'll slip and turn your ankle. Anne, you're crazy!"

"Nonsense, never slip!"

She darted up, heedless of my cautions, and when finally I reached the top, quite out of breath, she was watching me with a malicious smile from her seat in the little observatory.

"Come up here and take a peep at the view. A fine soldier, to be out-distanced by a woman!"

"That's hardly fair," I said, laughing and relieved to

pass from the dangerous seriousness of a moment ago. "Give me a few more weeks."

Instantly she was contrite.

"How thoughtless of me. Forgive me!"

"Very little to forgive. By George, that's fine." The valley lay below us, blanketed with a sheen of snow that in great spaces lifted occasionally for a glimpse of green; black-blue shadows in the far hills, and faint, transparent reds in the bared branches against the sky; the whole tremulously still, a winter cameo cut in frozen silences.

"Do you want to go back?" she said at last.

"I shall answer you as I answered your father; honestly, no."

"But then, why? Surely, after what you've been through, in your condition, and it would be so easy to arrange — "

"Exactly; but you, as my friend — would you want me to stay?"

She did not answer.

"Would you?"

"It is not your war."

"That isn't the point."

"It *is* the point," she said, in sudden rebellion. "No, I don't want you to go back. It's absurd, unnecessary, quixotic!"

Poor Anne. She little knew what harm she had done by that one little outburst. I remembered Bernoline, and, when next I looked at Anne, I saw only a child.

"And when we get into it? What then, young lady?" I said, laughing. "Are you going to arrange everything to suit yourself?"

"Davy, if you knew how you hurt me when you take that tone," she said, shrinking back. "I am not a child."

"Then, Anne, you must face life as it comes to you.

We can't make it as we want it, but our kind, of all the world, should never dodge a responsibility."

"I always show you my worst side," she said, shaking her head, and presently, leading the way down the ravine again, but this time more deliberately, she began to chatter lightly of old memories without an approach to intimacy, until the moment came for my departure.

"David, have you still such a bad opinion of me?" she said, seeking the answer in my eyes.

"I never have had."

"Funny: I am not at all myself with you. It's because I'm so used to looking up to you, I suppose."

"Because I am such an old bear, you mean."

"No, no, that's not what I mean. I'm very much of a woman now — more than you can ever imagine — and quite capable of determining my life for myself. And I know what I want. And, David — don't make one mistake."

"What?"

"I'm not in love with you."

Before I could recover myself, she had skipped up the steps. And so ended this strange interview. Not being myself in love with her, I could estimate more deliberately the value of her last words, and yet, knowing in my own experience all the wound to her pride that the fear of my divining her true motives would bring, I think her last defiance brought me into closer sympathy with my old playmate.

When I reached home, Ben and Letty were there, — come for the Christmas holidays.

"David!"

As I was hurrying through the hall, she called me to her, where she was warming herself by the fireplace.

"You here?" I said, feigning surprise.

"B'rrr! You are cordial as an open door. They said you were at the Brinsmades'."

"Yes."

"Monsieur fait des conquêtes?"

I shrugged my shoulders and disdained a reply, which always irritated her.

"So you are in love — again, David?" she said, with her provoking smile.

"Does this amuse you?"

"You forget that I remember the signs."

At this I stared at her in such futile anger that she laughed to herself, well content.

"But I quite approve! An excellent match for you!"

Then she deliberately dropped her muff, and as I stooped to pick it up, she leaned over and pinched my ear.

"Have you forgotten that, *mon ami?*"

The muff was scented with the perfume I knew. I came up angry and baffled.

"My dear Davy, if you are not going to pay me some attention, you may as well go right to your brother and tell all. The situation is evident."

I left her in a vindictive, smoldering rage, — in one of those moods of violence into which she had thrown me a hundred times, out of her malicious pleasure. Does she love me or hate me? Which is the explanation? As for myself, the anger she awakened frightened me, for before I was confident of my utter indifference. Is it possible that by some baneful trick of habit there can remain a vestige of the old tyranny over my senses? It is unthinkable! If only I could go to Ben! But no, that is impossible! And for a week, while we three are under the same roof, this hideous comedy must go on!

As I go back over my interview with Anne, I am somewhat puzzled. Why was I so brutally direct? I should

towards life: that the old desire to play my part is new again; that I am not aloof but vibrantly a part of my day and my nation, thrilled with the sudden rising anger at temporizing that is sweeping the country, — a great, mounting, climactic storm of wrath. The hour is coming, I know, when America will show to the world and to itself the majesty of its indignant pride.

Christmas night has always been open cheer with us and, with me home, the house was crowded with friends from the countryside and the village. They came in sleighs and cutters, with jingling bells, wrapped in voluminous scarfs, stamping in the great hallway, eager for the good cheer of a gathering which took them back to the rollicking days of Merrie England. Threescore, at least, and for every man, woman and child some present on the old tree. For we at Littledale have a custom that I don't remember seeing elsewhere.

In the back of the house, between the two wings, is a stone-flagged court, and in the midst of it a splendid cedar. It was Rossie's idea as a child to convert it into the Christmas symbol. So, promptly at ten, being well-fed from the buffet of roast pig, fatted ducks, great crisp turkeys, mountainous dishes of vegetables, pies and cakes to stagger the imaginations of the youngest eyes, every one bustles into coats and wraps and crowds out into the court. There, the green tree is ablaze with lanterns and tinsel wreaths, with a magnificent Santa Claus to distribute the presents, with appropriate hits at the idiosyncrasies of each recipient. The fiddles strike up from the dining room. We join hands and go circling round the tree, singing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," until every one is exhausted from laughter and panting for breath, while the dogs go barking, in and out, frantic with the spirit of good cheer.

This year, on account of my father's health, we were in some doubt. But the Governor, like the fine old trump that he is, insisted that nothing be changed and watched the celebration from an upper window. The rest of the night was given up to square dances with old man Carpenter calling out the figures from the midst of the village fiddles. I wondered, watching the Governor, if he would see another such Christmas, or, for that matter, how many would dance so light-heartedly again. The accent of the evening was absolute democracy, — every one privileged to dance with every one else,— without introductions, and much scrambling under the mistletoe.

Jenny, my first flame, was there, — a buxom matron, with three ravenous youngsters. And once the hazards of a quadrille brought us all together, Jenny, Ben, Letty, Anne, and myself. In one figure, Ben and I being opposite each other, Letty was at my side and Jenny at his. I looked up at him and wondered if he remembered the day, twelve years ago, when he saved me from utterly throwing away my life. And the irony of it all, — that I should have been away and powerless, when I should have stood in his stead. Letty's behavior throughout the evening was outrageous, and Ben's face grew blacker and blacker. She flirted openly with several young friends of Molly's and deliberately with me, whenever she could bring it before the notice of Anne. Of course, knowing her of old, I realized that we were but the pretexts; that her real object was to torture Ben himself. And this alarmed me, for I saw already the progression towards tragedy.

"Letty, let me warn you again," I said to her, as we were dancing. She had come to me herself, out of pure malice, and to refuse would have been an open affront.

"Go on, Davy *mio*," she said, under her breath.

"When Ben's hands close about your little throat,—

they won't let go," I said savagely, "and I don't know that they ought to."

"David, I am bored — so bored!"

"I am not joking."

"Anything for excitement," she said, with her slow smile. "La petite Anne is *éprise*. Be quite attentive, Davy. You'll land her. Now you are angry, but it seems so natural to have you angry at me!"

"Since when have you danced in public?" I said, unwilling to show her my disgust and my rage. "And why now?"

"It isn't fair to the man, do you think?" she said softly.

I stopped abruptly. What devil had made her say this I don't know: but she was right. I have danced with hundreds of women, and never been conscious of what I held in my arms, — until that dance with Letty.

"Thank you; I must see to something," I said, leaving her abruptly, and making a pretext of examining the tree, I went out into the cold air, past the lanterned courtyard, and down the crunching way to the old wooden bridge by the duck pond.

What a hideous situation, and how my whole being revolted at the part I was forced to play! It is at such moments that the old instinct of superstition that lies dormant in each of us comes insistently back. I know that in my old worldly wisdom I have scoffed at Sunday-school morality and have seen as many sinners succeed as fail. Yet at such moments when fate overtakes me I go back to my childhood terror of pulpit thunderings and feel the avenging justice of the Old Testament at my back. It is no use repeating to myself that other men have done much worse than I have done and, the memory dropping away from them, become pillars of respectability. I feel the ominous pursuit of consequences and

hear the bitter cry of conscience, — *"The wages of sin is death."* Perhaps there are moments so personal in our lives that all morality returns into one individual experience, and right and wrong are momentarily but our superstitious estimate of cause and effect as it suddenly grips us.

Even as, in the bitter nausea of enforced hypocrisy, I stood there in the darkness, a prey to my remorse, I heard a step and knew that my brother was seeking me out.

"Is that you, Ben?"

"I saw you leave."

Then he had been watching us. The tone of his voice warned me. Again, I should have to lie.

"Couldn't stand it; had to break away."

"Why?"

It was black as pitch — thank heaven for that — but I felt as though through the obscurity his hot eyes were watching the tortured agitation on my face.

"It's not in my mood," I said rapidly. "Should think you'd understand. My God — with the Governor there — the thought of going back in a few weeks — of all that is coming to us — this dancing and merry-making before — "

"David, are you *lying* to me?"

His hand closed over my wrist, and the phrase died on my lips.

"Ben!"

"For God's sake, tell me the truth! What was there between you and Letty?"

What would I not have given to have bared my conscience to him; but it was not my life alone that was at stake. There was the good name of the family. For a moment, I felt lost in a sickly weakness, and hideous possibilities seemed to strike at me out of the darkness.

Then I recovered myself. I began to act. I acted as I had never done before in my life. I caught him by the shoulders and shook him.

"Ben, don't be a damn fool!"

"Is that your answer?"

"Answer? How can I answer a crazy man? Do you think if there had been, I should ever have come back here? Do you?" In my emotion my hands cut into his shoulders and, driven on by the force of circumstances, I said fiercely, "No, I don't approve of your marriage. You are not happy. I knew you wouldn't be. Women like Letty never become real wives. Not that she will do anything she oughtn't to do — she is too cold-blooded — she loves her little self more than she can ever love anybody else — but the breath of her life is flattery and adoration. God knows, I never wanted to tell you this — but you've forced it out of me."

"You're telling me nothing new."

"In heaven's name, why did you do it, Ben?"

He started back at some thought suggested by this outburst of mine.

"You know something about her, then — over there in Paris?"

I caught myself. Every word, I felt, was dangerous, and anything I might say a trap.

"Ben, do you realize we are discussing your wife?" I said slowly. "Do you realize how impossible this conversation is?"

"Damn it! You're beating around the bush. You're my brother, and I have a right to know."

"Letty is no different from the women of her set, here or over there; no better, no worse. You have chosen to take one of them for your wife. If you ask me has there ever been any public scandal attached to her name, I can say at once, no —absolutely not."

"You're telling me the truth?"

"I am."

"Thank God, at least for that!"

"As for the rest, I repeat, I don't believe Letty has any heart to give to you or to any one else. That may be cold comfort, but I believe it."

"If only I believed it!"

"You can. She is a child playing with toys. She must have her toys, to play with and to break. Just at present, because she sees she can torture you, she is amusing herself, just as a child would with a woolly lamb — twisting its legs. Whether she flirts with me or with a dozen men, she's not thinking of us; it's you."

"Don't — "

"Ben, there's only one thing to do: grin and bear it, or — "

"Well?"

"Separate and divorce," I said, and no sooner had I said it than hope flared up in me, — the one hope of ending a ghastly situation.

"It's not so simple."

"Do you care — still?"

He stood at my side without an answer.

"Ben, remember one thing."

"The family — oh, yes — I hope to God I can remember it," he broke out. "Davy, sometimes I see so red that — that — "

"Stop talking like a fool," I said angrily. "You've chosen to do what you've done. You didn't marry to make a home or with the hope of having children, did you? You married Letty, as half the men we know marry — just in a blind instinct for possession. Now, whatever happens, however you work it out, you're not going to do anything to disgrace the family. Keep that in mind, Ben."

"I wish to God I could go back with you and get into it."

"Why not?"

"If I don't — I don't know what'll happen," he said, very low. "Davy, it's all very well for you to stand here and say what you say. You've got a cold head. Do you think a man in my position is normal? Do you think that he knows what he is doing half the time? I tell you, Davy, I'm afraid — afraid."

My mind was made up on that instant.

"Ben, you know I'd do anything in the world for you, don't you? Will you trust me to make the decision for you?"

"Yes," he said, after a moment.

"You are coming back with me." I hesitated, and then added: "For I'm afraid, too."

So, it is agreed that we go off to France together, though nothing is to be said of it for the present. That is three weeks ahead; much can happen before then. Will he hold to his determination? Will he find the strength to wrench himself free of the slavery of the senses, — for that is all there is to it? I don't know. I can only wait, fearful of the issue. I can only hope and pray.

Letty, I knew, would have noticed our absence and be watching for our return, and though I didn't see her when we came into the hall, I was certain that somewhere in the crowd her sharp, unquiet eyes were on us. Late in the evening she came to me as I had expected.

"*Eh bien, Davy mio,* you are amusing yourself?"

"And you?"

"I am curious," she said, looking at me intently.

I raised my hand to my throat significantly and the look in my eyes must have frightened her, for she attempted no more persiflage but moved away, rather still and

serious for the rest of the evening. Perhaps, at the bottom of her feline soul, there is a touch of genuine fear and — a desire to live.

I thought the evening would never end. Anne reproached me for my gloominess and went off early, hurt, I know, at my seeming indifference. I do not love her, I am sure of that; and yet I cannot bear to see a certain wounded look in her eyes!

VIII

To-day, a strange conversation with Molly, — strange, for all at once I seemed to know the human being with whom I had lived all these years. Until now, I had thought of her only as a lovely child, something soft and gentle, a laugh that was good to hear, a smiling face, content, as you enjoy a graceful animal, a bit of sunshine and the fragrance of the violet beds. Now, to my astonishment, I perceive a woman; a directness of vision; a delicate perception of standards and a firmness of purpose.

She came in late from a skating party over at the Brinsmades', where I had purposely not gone, and, at the first glance of her telltale countenance, I knew that something had happened. In the hall she caught my hand.

"Come up-stairs with me, Davy, just a minute."

"Up it is, young lady."

Much intrigued and a little apprehensive, I followed her into the blue sitting room and closed the door. The next moment she was in my arms, weeping out her heart on my shoulder.

"Oh, Davy, Davy, I had to come to some one!"

"But, good heavens, what's wrong?" I was thinking of Letty and wondering.

"I am so miserably unhappy!"

"Then talk it out with me. It'll do you good."

"Oh, Davy, some one wants to marry me!"

I started to burst out laughing at this and suddenly checked myself. I held her from me, her shoulders in my hands, and said, with a swift jealousy:

"You child! What right have you to be thinking of such things!"

"What things, Davy?"

"Falling in love, and marriage."

"But I'm not in love — and that's just the awful part of it! It's of him I'm thinking. It's so terrible to think that a man has fallen in love with you, that he cares as much as all that — when you know you can't — you never will. I — I feel as though I had committed a crime!"

I took her into my arms again and I think I never loved her, my little sister, as I did at that moment. If this were American womanhood, I felt a sudden thrill of pride!

"Perhaps, it is not so serious —"

"It is, it is," she protested, hiding her face against my shoulder. "If you had seen his face! I was so sorry for him, Davy. It's terrible that he should come to care like that! Oh, don't laugh at me — there's no one else to go to but you — and do try to understand!"

"I couldn't laugh at you, bless your honest little heart, and I think I understand," I said, wondering a little if she knew her true feelings. "Is this the first time any man has proposed —"

"Yes, and I saw it coming, and I dreaded it so, and when I couldn't prevent it I was so frightened. He was so terribly in earnest, and his face went so white. I —

I couldn't say a thing, — I just burst into tears and ran away. Oh, David, I feel so guilty. I can't bear that any one should be so unhappy as that — just over me!"

"This is what life means, little sister," I said, drawing her down beside me on the old chintz sofa. "These are the things no one can protect us from. And now, tell me, are you quite sure of your own feelings?"

She raised her eyes, her eyes clear as Bernoline's, to me and in that moment I felt the spiritual kinship of true womanhood that lies underneath all social divisions.

"It will be a long time before I shall fall in love. I am only a girl now, Davy. I want to be a woman first, to have read and thought much. For I want to be fit to be at the head of my home and for the lives that may come to me."

"Do you really feel that way, Molly dear?"

"Can any one feel differently about such things?"

I bent over her hand and caught it to my lips.

"That is the only right way — the natural way to think."

"Oh, David, I do want to talk to you so much! You see, I never can, with mother: you know how it is. There's only you, Davy. I don't love Ted. I'm sure I never will love him, but it seems so terrible that I should lose the other — the real friendship — and yet I suppose that's not possible —"

"Not quite fair to him."

"No, and Ted is the only one to think about, isn't he?"

"Ted?"

"Ted Seaver."

"Oh, yes, the tall one, with dark hair," I said, seeing confusedly one of the many who had passed through the house. "Why, he's only a boy. What right had he —"

"That's just it; but, of course, he's not such a boy: he's twenty-three, and he couldn't help saying what he

did. And I did respect him for the way he did it. Only — only such things are way off —"

"I should hope so."

"It would have to be some one — some one very much of a man — whom I could look up to — some one much stronger than I am — who has been really tested and come through." Again she looked at me and, suddenly laying her hand over mine, said: "Some one like you, Davy."

The look of clear faith as her face lit up somehow searched into my heart and left me humble and regretful. I looked down at her white hand against my dark one, and Jessica's words came into my mind,

"So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

"I'm glad you came to me, Molly," I said, "and I value your confidence very deeply. Suppose we snuggle up before the fire and talk lots of things out!"

"Oh, if you only would!"

I touched a match to the tinder, wheeled her into position and sat down beside her. She leaned forward, her hands clasped over her knees, her look sunk in the climbing flame.

"It's such a pity!"

"What, Molly?"

"It is such a sad thing to think, David, that it can't just remain a friendship. I am thinking of the friend I have lost. There are many girls who are terribly excited about men — falling in love with them. I'm not that way." I only wish — because in the end it's you who lose — isn't it?"

"How long have you known him?"

"Ted? Almost a year."

She looked, and saw the lingering question in my eye.

"Oh, David, you don't understand me at all!"

"Yes, yes, I do, but sometimes —"

"If I cared for him, do you think I'd tell any one — even you?"

This brought me up sharp. I laughed, quite amazed, and not at all sure that I liked it.

"That's a rather queer way of putting it."

"Don't tease me, David. You understand."

"I suppose that means, young lady," I said, thinking of something I had been impelled to write a few days ago, "that when the time comes, you'll go whisking out of this house on the arm of some stranger, without even saying 'by your leave'."

"If you mean shall I decide for myself — of course, David!"

"And even a big brother's advice —"

"No, David; not even you. How can any one else know? And then, think of the responsibility of deciding such a thing! If I really cared, I should believe in him, no matter what any one would tell me."

"Molly," I said, a bit surprised though to find myself playing the part of Wisdom, "I am not much worried about you. You will make no mistake. There's an honest, direct way you have of facing life that I think I can trust. Only, I want you to value yourself very high, and I'm afraid sometimes that just because you are so straightforward and unselfish you may not realize what you are worth."

"That's very dear of you," she said pensively. "Of course, I won't pretend to you that I don't — well, that I don't sometimes look ahead and wonder. Of course, I do. And I have a very high ideal."

"It is so easy to make mistakes. It's when you want to love, my dear little sister, that it is easy to believe you do love. Such awful mistakes can be made."

"Now you are thinking of Ben," she said irrelevantly.

"No, no, I was thinking of myself," I said hastily, for

Letty was a subject I could not discuss with her. "Do you know, if I hadn't been prevented — I would — well, I don't want to say I would have — I might have thrown away my whole life on a mad suicidal marriage?"

"I know," she said, nodding her head.

"You know? What do you mean?" I said, startled.

"Don't be angry, David. I guessed. It was Jenny Barnett, wasn't it?"

I laughed, to cover my confusion and my amazement, — a not very successful laugh.

"Yes, it was Jenny; and that's why I say be very sure, just at first."

"But, David, I am not like you. You have always been so impulsive, so intense."

"I impulsive?" I cried, forgetting how the conversation had switched. And I was genuinely amazed, for frankly, it had never occurred to me to look at myself as such. Though I am not sure but what she is right, but how she learned to see me so clearly is beyond me.

"Yes, you are! I never know what you're going to do; whereas I — I am really quite sensible and matter-of-fact. Why haven't *you* married, David? You ought to."

"I thought, young lady, we were here to discuss your affairs," I said warily.

"Please, David, let me talk to you," she said, raising her eyes to mine. "I love you very much, more than any one else in the world. And we ought to be very close to each other, real confidants."

"Now, what's coming?" I thought to myself, but, putting on a brave front, I answered, "Fire away, then."

"I feel you are unhappy. I feel it so strongly."

"I am neither happy nor unhappy," I said, being on my guard. "All I am thinking about now is going back and doing my duty, because it is quite immaterial, so long as the war lasts, what I plan to do."

"I am thinking of Anne."

"Now, we have it! Young lady, there is such a thing as imagining you see too much."

"Don't you think, David," she said, not paying the slightest attention to me, "that it would be kinder, more honest, if you told her —"

"Told her what?"

"That you love some one else."

I jumped at this, in great wrath.

"Extraordinary! Child, where did you imagine — "

"Don't be angry, David. You needn't tell me if you don't want to — but I know. I've seen it in your face too often, these days. Only, I think it's hard on Anne."

I decided on another course.

"My dear Molly, Anne isn't in the slightest doubt as to my feelings towards her. I wish I did love her, sometimes. I don't. And if I did, I shouldn't tell her so — just as I was going off to war."

"Why not?"

"Because a man has no right to take a woman's heart when it may mean an empty life for the rest of her existence."

"But why, David? If you men are willing to give your lives, why should we women not have our part of sorrow?"

"Each as he feels: that's my point of view," I said. Yet, as I look at it now, I wonder why I said it, for no such compunction had arrested my impulse toward Bernoline. "However, that's all academic and don't get it into your romantic little head that I'm not telling you the truth about Anne. Furthermore, she understands."

She shook her head.

"I'm inclined to shake you!" I said, vexed.

The next moment her arms closed about me.

"David, I can't bear to see you unhappy; that's all."

As I look back on this conversation, I am the more amazed. Where did she get such uncanny insight into my thoughts? What had not her child's eyes divined? — if they had ever been the eyes of a child! I suppose my irritation arose from the fact that she had come too close to my own misgivings. No, I am not quite sure that I have been honest with Anne, even when I assured myself that I was. Before I leave I shall see Anne again. To-night, I know what I shall say: but I am not sure what it will be at the time.

IX

New York

I AM here with Ben at the hotel and at noon, day after to-morrow, we sail for France. To me, as to him, it is an escape from a hideous situation. All day I have tramped the streets, seeking in the crowds a glimpse of Bernoline. Twice I came to the steps of St. Rosa's Convent, — tempted. If I had any doubt as to the lasting wound that is in my heart, I know now. To be in this city, where she walks hidden in the wilderness of human beings, where at every turn I look for her! There is nothing here for me — nothing! I want to get back to the other life — to be from morning to night a pawn in the fingers of fate — to have every decision made for me — to surrender my initiative — to accept what can't be changed — to perform without question.

But to go back. The leave-taking was hard, the shadow was over it all. If I come back — and who knows? — one place will be empty. But first, Anne.

For days I had not seen her. Each consciously avoided the other. Yet a good deal of what Molly had said haunted me: I could not depart without some explanation. We left Sunday. Friday afternoon I called her up on the telephone, and asked if I might come over, — a strange conversation, full of long pauses and hesitations, where I could not see her face and could only wonder.

"I am going Sunday — you know?"

"Yes, I know."

"And I really would like to see you before then."

"But, David, I'm leaving in an hour."

Curiously enough, this upset me more than I would have thought.

"Leaving? Where?" I asked stupidly.

There was a long silence.

"Anne!"

"Yes?"

"And to-morrow?"

"But I am leaving in an hour for a week end."

"Oh, then I shan't see you. I'm sorry."

"You should have let me know before."

"Yes, yes, of course. My fault. Well, I suppose it can't be helped."

No answer.

"When do you leave?"

"In an hour."

"Then I'm afraid it's good-by over the telephone."

"You haven't been very friendly, you know."

"I know."

Another silence.

"Will you write to me once in a while?"

"Do you want me to, David?"

"Please."

"Very well — once in a while."

Now this was not the turn I had wished to give to my

parting, but some sudden feeling of the blankness of her eyes caused me to relent.

"So, it's good-by, Anne, and — I'm sorry it's to be like this."

"It is not my fault."

"No."

"Then — good-by, and good luck — Davy."

The last was almost inaudible. I put up the receiver and went to my room and puttered around nervously with my packing, not at all quiet in my mind and frankly missing something out of my day.

In the middle of the afternoon, all at once, I determined to fling on my things and go out for a tramp, to calm my irritation. I had hardly passed the postern when who should come whirling up the road in her cutter, bells jangling, snow clouds flying, but Anne, with her cheeks aflame.

"Jump in."

I clambered to the seat by her side and we were off so precipitately that I caught at her arm to save myself a tumble. Away we went, skipping over the crinkling snow, the sharp wind whipping at our cheeks, long minutes without a word, until Littledale and the outskirts were left behind in a whirling maze. At Muncie's Woods she drew in suddenly and under the green canopy of the evergreens we slowed to a walk.

"There was no house party," she said, staring ahead.

"Of course not."

"How did you know?"

"I knew."

"What a spiteful, irrational, idiotic person you must think me."

"No — very human."

She shook her head, and I thought her lip trembled a little.

"It's always so, and I can't help it. I'm always doing the wrong thing with you."

I did not answer this, for I was afraid to.

"It's been a miserably unsatisfactory time," she said, flicking the horses suddenly with her whip, so that they pranced about for quite a moment before she could control them. "I had looked forward so much to your coming, to going back to the old days, Davy. They were the best — and instead, we have only been fencing with each other. We never say what we mean. And I — I show you my very worst self — my worst! Everything I say to you, you misunderstand."

"There you are wrong."

"You do, you do! You are always ascribing to me motives that aren't there, and so, David, there are two things I can't bear from you, ridicule, and — pity!"

"Good heavens, nothing is further from my mind."

"That's not true," she said obstinately. "David, why can't we say the things we think to each other? Is there any reason?"

"It is sometimes rather hard, Anne, isn't it?"

"There you go! But if we don't — don't you see that we lose all that was so wonderful, so rare, so genuine that we once had. And this is what is happening." Still she had not looked at me. Her mood changed and she drew the lash of her whip over the steaming flank of a horse. When she spoke it was gravely and with determination, the voice of a woman. "David, I do not think any harm can come from being absolutely honest, and sometimes, for not being so, a whole destiny may be changed. David, whatever you think I am — I am not in love with you — "

"But I never — "

"I am not in love with you, but I can imagine — some day — if I did — if I was — well, marrying you."

The next moment the whip had struck across the glistening back and we shot out into a gallop.

"Stop!" I cried out, but she only shook her head, bending lower to hide her face that was aflame with confusion.

"Stop!"

I caught the reins from her and brought our perilous rocking flight to a halt. Then I turned to her. Poor child, I knew what the suspense of that moment meant to her! I could almost feel her heart stand still; even then, thank heaven, I did not abuse the situation — at least, I think not — and heaven knows how easy it would have been!

"Anne, dear little friend, I think more of you at this minute than I ever have, for saying that."

"Oh, Davy, I shall want to kill myself to-night for — "

"No, don't say that. Now, I am going to be just as honest with you."

I saw her hand steal up to her throat and hurried on to end the suspense.

"I feel just as you do. I am not in love with you, and yet I can imagine, just as you said, that if some day I married you a great happiness would come into my life. Would to God I could say more!"

She turned for the first time as I began to speak and her eyes went to mine. I had a strange premonition there in the green light of the forest, in the stillness of the carpeted woods, the stillness that was in her listening face, that beyond the inscrutable future, through what twisted tormented ways I know not, in some final calm, just for the strange incongruous daring of that moment, Anne and I would end as husband and wife. Premonition or illusion, — I write it down as I felt it.

"Will you really believe me?" she said, and her glance went down, "when I say that I should never, never have said even this if — if it were not that you are going back,

and everything else seems so little beside that. Will you understand that I can be like this, that without being in love I can look into the future and see what may come? David, it's — it's so hard to say — "

"I don't think so. Say just what you feel, and then I shall be just as honest."

"You have always been different in my life, David. Other men have just been shells. You I've known, and you've known me. It isn't that, oh, since we are talking this way, it's this: I know my weaknesses, Davy — oh, so well — and I know what I'll become if I marry a certain type of man. It's what you bring out in me, the thing I want to be when I'm with you. Of course, it sounds terribly — I'm ashamed to say it. No, don't look at me; but David, I can say this — when you come back — some day, when it's all over — I shan't have changed."

"Shan't have what?"

"Changed," she said, in a whisper.

I felt my eyes blurred. What wouldn't I have given to have been able at that moment, in perfect honesty, to have taken her into my arms for her sake — and for mine!

"Anne," I said, "let me tell you this, — for you will want to know this when you look back to-night: never regret what you have done. We have come closer together this afternoon than ever before, and you have done it."

"Do you mean it, Davy?" she said, looking up, her eyes shining so that it was hard to resist them.

"I do. From now on I shall always know the strength of a woman — a very real woman — that is in you. You have left a memory that I shall hold in great reverence. Between us now there will be always absolute honesty; and that is something to build on. Hold what we have,

dear friend, and let us both have some faith in the future."

"Thank you, David," she said, with a touch of wistfulness. Then, "And now, tell me — "

"Are you sure you want to hear? It will hurt you."

"I only know that you are unhappy. And, David, I think that is the reason, the real reason I have come to you."

It was hard to begin, for I, too, shrunk from the pain I knew I would give her. Presently, she said, looking up at my clouded face:

"There was some one else — "

I nodded.

"Of course, I knew there was."

"There *is*."

"Oh."

"But it is quite hopeless," I added hastily.

"Quite hopeless?" she said, looking at me, and so strange are the ways of the heart, that, I believe, that was the only thought she seized upon.

"I only knew her for ten days. I shall never see her again. I have promised."

"It hurts?"

"Yes."

"I am sorry." She laid her hand on my arm and looked away. "Is — is it because she's married, David?"

Strange to say, the suggestion came to me like a flash of lightning in the darkness of my perplexity. Never once had such an explanation occurred to me. I thought it over and wondered.

"You needn't answer."

"I do not think so," I said, without thinking how strange this must sound. "I don't know — I hardly know anything about her. We are entirely apart in everything, — race, tradition, faith."

"And if it were not hopeless, David?"

"Don't ask me."

We drove on in silence, each to his own thoughts. In the end it was Anne who spoke.

"Just one question: is — is she there — in France?"

"No. She is here. What I said is true. She is gone utterly out of my life. It was her decision. Why? I don't even know. It was all very beautiful and very tragic. It is over — all except the forgetting." I drew a long breath and turned to her. "That is going to be a hard fight, but it must be done. I wonder if I should have told you this."

"Oh, yes, yes! You should have told me."

"Of course. Anne — I want you to know this, too. With what we have been to each other — we are now — I should never ask anything of you unless I did love you with my whole heart. That is your right. This is a strange conversation, but I think you know me well enough to believe that!"

"Of course, David."

She looked at me, and her eyes suddenly were filled with tears.

"I wish I could feel that you needed me a little."

"Good God! But have I the right!"

Then, she did a thing I shall never forget, — that only comes to the intuition of the woman who loves. She drew off her glove and laid her bare hand in mine. And so, speaking little, we returned.

Is it possible, I wonder, that with one's heart filled with the ache and anguish of a love that is denied any hope, the soul in its defensive instinct can look ahead and know what some future date may bring? For, to-day, I can say this with perfect honesty: I need to keep Anne in my life.

The last moments in the old home were harder than I had thought. Aunt Janie was the bravest of them all, not excepting the mater, but then, Aunt Janie, bless her heart, is of the heroic line. Molly has come on to see us off, though I begged her not to. The hardest was saying good-by to the Governor. During the weeks of my return he had seemed to pick up famously, until we had almost begun to hope. But, at the last, all the light went out of his face. And when I leaned down suddenly and kissed him, his fingers clung to my hand until I had gently to release them. I had left this till the last minute and hurried out into the hall, where Molly put her arms around me and took me to the sleigh. For one thing I am profoundly thankful: he remembered Alan, and I carry to him the old daguerreotype of the Governor as a young man.

At the station every one in the village waited. The Littledale Band played "The Marseillaise" and other patriotic airs, amid great waving of handkerchiefs and cheering. You would have thought I was a candidate for Governor. But I was too affected to do anything but wave back.

What Ben has said to Letty I do not know. He seldom speaks, but a certain grimness settles over him as he paces up and down. I'm afraid that it has cost him more than he thought to tear himself away from her. To-night everything seems confused and out of joint, — Anne, Bernoline, the Governor, Ben, Letty; myself most of all. Again, the close of another chapter — the wrench of old associations — new hazards, and what beyond?

If only I could see *her* once more!

X

New York

I HAVE seen her, by some miracle of coincident, or by a destiny which never seems to leave me. It is midnight, and I have been sitting here, my head in my hands, my brain galloping, going over and over every word, every look. I have seen her, talked to her, held her in my arms! What is the trick destiny has played on me? What is my mood to-night? Exaltation, or the sense of having bound myself irrevocably to tragedy? At one moment the wildest hopes surge up in me: I live in fantastic day-dreams with a belief in some miraculous, healing Providence. At the next I am dropped into bottomless despair, and I see no end but unfulfilled longing and the emptiness of denial. And so, what I have longed for, to see her once again, has come, and I don't know which is the stronger, — the joy of hoping or the pain of certainty.

All day long I had sought her, aimlessly, without a plan, weary of spirit, without a hope, but with a prayer on my lips, as even men of no faith pray in a last hope, when all other means have failed them. Towards evening the thought came to me to seek her in the calm of vaulted spaces, and I went into the Cathedral, and, from there, into the Church of the Dominican Fathers. Then the inspiration came to me that if she were anywhere it would be in the little French Church of the Franciscans. No sooner had this idea come to me than a strange sense of certainty possessed me. I went there, absolutely convinced that I would find her.

Yet, at my entrance, as I stood with incredulous, blinded eyes, peering into the hollow obscurity, my heart sank. And then I saw her!

How I knew that the kneeling figure by the little altar of the Virgin was Bernoline, I do not know, but I knew. My heart seemed to stop. I leaned against a pillar and waited. The great vaulted supports rose up and closed above me somewhere in the night. Far off I heard a slipping step. Through the church a dozen tiny lights burned silently. At her altar the Mother of Sorrows looked down out of the shadow of the ages. She was on her knees, the mellow points of the votive candles lighting her uplifted face in a glow of serene radiance. So I saw her again, as I had imagined her a hundred times, when I knew she returned to me in her prayers.

There are pictures which remain in memory's galleries. This will never fade.

Something of my presence she must have felt, for all at once her hand was arrested in mid-air, and she turned and met my look. Instantly I came forward and knelt at her side. I saw her lips open and over her face the wonder of a living miracle. I know now that my name was on her lips at that very moment, and that in her simple faith she saw the answer. Her great dark eyes met mine. I saw her breast rise. Her pale slender hand went to her throat, and in that first unwavering look I knew at last how I was loved.

"Bernoline, it is God's will."

"It is you. I prayed that I might see you once again."

She laid her hand on mine, bidding me wait, and went off into the stony vastness. Presently I heard the step I knew from all others returning. A pervading sense of happiness such as I had never known filled my whole being at the knowledge that she was drawing near, that she whom I loved was coming back to me. When I raised my eyes she was at my side, tenderness and pride in her

face, and in her hand a thin white taper. She knelt again.

"Mother, I thank thee," she said.

She rose and, lighting the wick at the wavering crown of tiered tapers, placed it so that it dominated all the rest.

"Your light, *mon ami,* — above the crowd, always; strong, proud and true."

Then kneeling, she made the sign of the cross, and as a smile of thankfulness touched her lips, I knew that she prayed for me.

I forgot all the complex world of realities: actions and reactions of our mortal nature; doubts, questionings, logic and tradition. There, in the silence and the shadows, purity at my side, mystery above me, my spirit took wings with the faith that was hers. I do not think that I uttered a prayer, yet it was a prayer, for at that moment I believed as a child believes.

When she touched my arm I rose and followed her. At the end of the aisle, a mutual impulse made us turn. The candle, my candle, shone out bravely above the rest.

"You will remember?"

"Always."

When we emerged into the strange, jarring world, the healing dusk was stealing over the hard outlines. For a moment we walked silently, our hearts too full, unable to speak to each other.

"To-morrow I sail for France."

"To-morrow?" she cried, with a little catch in her voice.

"You will walk a little way with me? A last time?"

"How could I help it, *mon ami?*"

She looked at me and smiled her sad little smile, and I saw in her eyes the weariness of the struggling against the call of her heart. A great hope came to me.

"I thought you would wait for America," she said, and now her eyes no longer avoided mine but seemed never to leave my face.

"I'm going back to the Legion and, of course, the moment we go in, and that can't be long, I shall be transferred."

"You are well?"

"Entirely."

What did it matter what we said? I think neither of us really knew. I saw only the light that shone in her eyes, and in the joy of being together neither the past nor the future nor the things about us existed. I took her arm and slowed my pace to the meditative step I knew so well, and together, heads bowed and still too happily oppressed by all we had to say to each other, we went silently towards the Park, each content with the knowledge of the other's presence. It was the hour when the city, like another Cinderella, steps out of the drab and homespun of the day into the beaded fairy raiment of the twilight; when through the hard and hazy battlements something soft and gentle tempers the air; when the clamor of strident sounds lingers faintly in the drowsy distance and polyglot ugliness masks itself behind half-shadows and fleeting forms.

"Ah, Davy, I did want to see you again," she said, without subterfuge, in the honesty of her nature, as only her nature could be honest. "I wanted to see you strong — yourself. I wanted to know that I had not brought you weakness and sorrow. *Mon ami,* tell me that it is so."

We had wandered into the Park, through obscure winding paths, the argus-eyed city receding against the darkling sky, the lake at our feet, and only an occasional passer-by hurrying on his way. At the bridge we stopped, leaning over, shoulder to shoulder, each of us under the

spell of the silence which visited us, and afraid of the test that words would bring.

"I cannot tell you anything that is not true, — even for your sake," I said at last.

"No, David."

"But first, you. How has it gone with you? It has been hard, Bernoline?"

"No, no."

"That is the truth?"

"Yes, *mon ami.* It has not been hard. I have found great kindness. I am companion in the family of a true gentlewoman."

"Bernoline, I cannot bear to think of you —"

"Hush; it is so little when you think of what has come to other women."

"Bernoline, you do not know how I have fought to keep my promise. I've gone by St. Rosa's Convent a dozen times, and twice I wrote you letters, — only to tear them up."

"But you won out, *mon ami.* I knew you would."

"Yes, but there is no happiness in it."

"Must I always hurt you, Davy?" she said sadly, "I who only long to protect you? Dear friend, all I have done — believe me, though you cannot understand it — has been done for you."

"Yes, Bernoline."

I felt that the moment had come when the happiness of my whole life was there in my hands to fight for. We were no longer man and woman, but two atoms in the wavering sea of multitudes, — atoms gravitating towards each other, cleaving together despite opposition and circumstance, despite all the forces of society that laboriously and fruitlessly lay their inhibitions against the great sweeping instincts of race.

"Night and day, David, I have had you in my prayers.

I have prayed that our meeting — our knowing each other — would leave no wound in you. Ah, *mon ami,* if I do this strange thing, to be here alone with you, it is because I must know that I am not to carry that remorse through all my life." She stopped, as though dreading what she might be led to say, and then, staring down at the stars that swam in the dark waters below us, she added slowly: "I shall never be sure — never — until I know that you are in your own home, married and happy."

Then I broke out.

"Bernoline, are you quite honest with yourself?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that is not the true reason. Bernoline, if you are here, to-night, alone at my side, it is because you cannot help it — because you love me. Oh, why hide from ourselves what is?"

"No, no! Don't say that!"

"Bernoline, Bernoline, why deny it?" I cried, bending over her. "You don't deceive me; you don't deceive yourself! What stands between us? What can stand? What do we care? What else counts but this thing we feel, here, now, at this very moment! We know. You know, as I know. Happiness, Bernoline? Do you think in the whole world there is any happiness for me away from you — from the longing for you, day and night! Bernoline, I tell you, you have never been an hour away from me. I have had you before my eyes; I have talked with you; lived over a thousand times each moment spent with you. Bernoline, turn to me, look at me, tell me —"

Do I know what I said, there in the deep pool of the night! It is not words, but accents, that we hear at such times. I don't know that she heard me any more than I can remember the torrent of pleading that surged

to my lips, but I know that she, too, felt the snapping of cords, the longing of my arms to reach out and draw her up to me, the wild triumphant force beating down all our little struggling, closing about us and confounding us in one impulse, one desire, for, all at once, she swayed from me and began to tremble, crying: "Don't touch me, David. I can't stand it — don't!"

"But why, in heaven's name, why?" Her voice stirred all my compassion, but the thought that I was fighting for my happiness, her happiness, was stronger. I came closer. "Bernoline, what is it? Pride? Is that all? Do you think I care who you are, what you are, what was your family, or anything else? You are you. And now, listen to me, Bernoline. To-morrow, I go back. Marry me to-night; be my wife. Let me take that with me in my heart!"

"If I could, if I only could!" she burst out suddenly.

"You can, you will," I said, with a sudden sense of triumphant victory, pitiless, as in love we are driven to show no mercy. "Bernoline, whatever it is, I have the right to share it. Yes, the right. Nothing else matters but you in my life. Do you understand? You *are* life!"

She turned to me, struggling against herself, her hands clasped, and again the terror in her eyes.

"I can't. I can't."

"But why, *why?*"

Suddenly, like a flash, I remembered the first instinctive question of Anne's. My heart contracted so sharply that for a moment I could not voice the terrible doubt.

"Bernoline — is there — any one else — who has a right?"

She stood, staring at me. Twice her lips moved, parted, trembled, and refused to utter the answer. Her hands gripped the coping, and I saw her arms stiffen.

"Bernoline, you are — married!" I said, in a whisper. "Is it that?"

Still she did not answer.

"Bernoline, for God's sake, say it is not that."

"Yes, yes — it is — that!"

I should not have known her voice.

"Good God! Why didn't you tell me before?"

I was stunned; yet it seemed as though I had always known — that it could have been nothing else. The world went black before me.

"He is alive?" I said, at last.

"Yes."

"You must go back to him, some day?"

"Never."

"Ah, Bernoline, why — why didn't you tell me?"

She waited a moment.

"It is not my secret alone. It is terrible that I cannot tell you any more than that. Yes, yes, I have done wrong: I have been weak. But don't you reproach me, David; that would break my heart!"

"Oh, no, I don't reproach you!" I blurted out. "I don't know your reasons. I know if you've done what you've done, there is a reason, and — it will always be right. Never, dear, could I have any other feeling towards you but of reverence for the loveliest and purest thing I have known."

"You can still think so, David?" she cried with a little sob.

"Always. Nothing that you or I can do will ever change that — and nothing that has gone before."

She looked up at me so swiftly, with her sad, sweet smile, that before I knew it she was in my arms, trembling against my heart, her head buried against my shoulder. I knew nothing more, what I did or said, only this: that we were united — that this soft, gentle body in my

arms was the woman who, whatever intervened, loved me now and irrevocably.

"Ah, mon bien aimé — ayez de la force pour moi — je n'en peux plus — non — non — je n'en peux plus!"

But even as she cried to me to be strong for her, she clung to me, her arms strained about me, and her body collapsed in my grip.

"Bernoline, look into my eyes, dear!"

She raised her head, her eyes met mine, all struggling at an end. Another moment, and our impending lips would have closed in the first kiss. Yet, by some inexplicable miracle, it was I who was the stronger. For what I saw in her dear eyes was so innocent and so full of trust that I could not tarnish the ideal. My arms loosed and slowly I put her from me.

She caught her breath, and her hands went to my shoulders.

"Yes, you are as I knew you were," she said proudly. "Never shall I forget, *David mon ami, mon ami adoré.*"

"Thank God!" I said, drawing a deep breath.

"And now, believe me, a last time — if I could — if I only had the right to say what you want to hear, how gladly my heart would go to you! But David, I can say this: in all my life, I have never for one instant loved any other man — and I never will. That is a promise."

"Bernoline, I have done everything as you wished, more than I would have believed I could do. This I ask: during those months of loneliness and trial, write to me, and let me write to you!"

"Is that wise, I wonder?" she said, yet already wishing to be convinced.

"You can not leave me utterly. I am not strong enough for that! Anything else — but not that!"

"Nor I." Her eyes filled with tears and then, at last, through the tears, the smile came bravely forth. "Until

the end of the war, then. And now —" She stopped, looked at me, and shook her head slowly.

"So soon?"

"It is best not to try ourselves beyond our strength," she said. "But — we will not go too fast."

I do not remember much what she said. For I was silent, once the great test passed, all at once weak and rebellious. She spoke to me, recalling our first meeting, speaking of the home she had found. My head was turning. All the complications, all the tragic incidents of our meeting and parting, the fatality that lay between us; all was nothing to the knowledge of the love that had looked at me out of the great dark eyes. My instincts revolted. I could not believe, I would not believe that this was the end. Somewhere, somehow, the future would be ours, if we had to wait — for twenty years!

We came to the end and, as I stood, all choked up, she took my hand and laid it against her heart — a moment.

"*Mon ami,* you will be there, always."

The light in her eyes is still before me as I write and the dear face, transformed with all the pure happiness of a child.

"And now —" she began reluctantly.

"No — no! Not that word!" I blurted out.

"As you wish," she said gravely. "Courage, and God keep you, my dear."

She went up the steps slowly, looking back, and her eyes for a moment lingered, smiling down on me, before she could find courage to end a look that might be the last. The door closed and shut her out from me.

And from these moments, sanctified in my memory, by the perverse turns of my fate, that seems to entangle all the skeins of my life, the good and the evil, I came back to meet — Letty.

She was in the salon that separated our rooms when I entered, and from the look on Ben's face I saw that his soul was being torn to its foundations. At my entrance they stopped, in a sudden telltale silence.

"You here, Letty?" I said, stupidly enough. God knows that no more unwelcome figure could have come before me at that moment.

She nodded curtly, but did not speak. She looked quite worn despite her artifice, and in her cold face the eyes burned forth as they did only when she was roused to some fury of obstinate determination. The conversation had been at a high tension, as I could see by Ben's ugly frown. I went into my bedroom and closed the door and, overcome by the moral nausea of this malignant intrusion across the clean memory of the evening's exaltation, I sank on the bed and, taking my head in my hands, cursed her from the bitterness of my heart as I have never cursed another human being.

Not that she had come to see me. I knew too well the only genuine impulse of which in her tired experience she was capable. It was only the prey which was escaping her that could rouse the female in her. I did not know how far Ben had gone in his revolt, — though I suspected that he had given an ultimatum. But I knew this, that Letty would never let him go without a struggle. What to do? My lips were sealed: the slightest false move might precipitate a tragedy. An hour passed, while I listened to the falling and rise of their contending voices, when, suddenly, the door opened and banged, and Ben came into the room.

"For God's sake, David, get her away!"

I sprang up, half expecting Letty to rush in — but she did not — and after a moment I went over to my brother and laid my hand on his shoulder to steady him.

"Ben, do you mean that?"

"Get her away — quick!"

"That's a big responsibility to take," I said slowly. "Your mind's made up?"

He dug his fingers into his arms and, in the breath that went through him, I felt a sudden vacillation.

"Ben," I said, sternly. "Stick to your guns. Care for you? All she cares is to know she can make you suffer. Sit down."

I went on tiptoe to the door and flung it open. As I had known, she was there, listening. But it is dangerous to try such a woman as Letty too far, and the blind rage I saw in her face at this exposure so frightened me that, closing the door behind me, I clapped my hand over her mouth and picked her up bodily.

"The scene is over, and out you go," I said, savagely. She did not struggle but suddenly became quiet and inert and, with the devilish instinct that was in her to wound me, her arms closed softly about my neck. I wrenched myself free, loathing the hated perfume of her body, and set her down in the hall.

"So, you have told him?" she said quickly, keen for the pretense at dramatics.

"If I had, you wouldn't be alive now," I said, and closed and locked the door and, for further security, slipped the key into my pocket.

It is four o'clock in the morning now, as I finish these lines. I can hear Ben in the next room, walking up and down.

XI

At Sea

We sailed at noon. Molly and Anne were on the deck to see us off, — Letty, to plant a final sting. Anne came

in after breakfast with her father and with Molly we went down to the boat. I do not know when I have been so sorry for any one as for Anne. What fatality ever impelled her to come into my life at just that moment? She came in so happily that immediately my heart fell, for I saw that our last interview in Littledale had left the way to the future open to her. Yet she had not been ten minutes with me before her woman's intuitions had warned her. I saw the light manner change to a sudden meditation and always when I turned my head her eyes were on me in anxious interrogation. Poor child — I would have spared her the pain, but it was not to be. The moment we were left alone together on the dark and pungent wharf, she turned to me and said:

"David, you have seen her?"

"Yes."

I took her arm and led her a little apart, to a nook where we were hidden from the crowd.

"Anne, for God's sake, put me out of your life," I said, taking her hand. "There is only misery and unhappiness if you don't. This is honest, because I must be honest with you."

"I can't put you out of my life," she said, shaking her head, "and if you are unhappy — all the more reason for me to stay in yours."

"Anne, it is not fair to you, to what your life may be."

"Let me be the judge of that, David," she said soberly, her hand on my arm. "Have I the right to know this? Is it — the other — still quite hopeless?"

"Quite," I said gloomily.

"David, my heart goes out to you. If I could only help. No, no — Wait a moment, I can't go back yet."

"All right now?"

"All right, David."

And when we went back, there was Letty, her arm through Molly's, as pretty and as enticing as could be, coquetting with Mr. Brinsmade. From her face one would never have had the slightest suspicion that there was the least flaw in the serene content of her day. I held myself on my guard, fearing her purpose, but at the last she caught me as, of course, she had intended. The whistle blew and with it the time to say good-by. Molly, little trump, held up with forced gayety and so did Anne, though I saw such suffering in her eyes that it was all I could do not to take her impulsively in my arms: for, no matter what I had protested for her sake, to know that she cared was a great consolation.

When it came Letty's turn, quite as the most natural thing in the world (as, of course, to the others it was), she flung her arms about me and kissed me; there — before Ben. Then she went off, protesting it was bad luck to see a ship out of port, thoroughly pleased with having planted a last dart. And Ben and I, with that kiss between us, went up the gangway.

"I hope to God I never lay eyes on her again!" he said, with an oath.

If only that may be true!

We went to the promenade deck and stood over the stern, gazing back at the shores that began to recede. The waters rushed in between the wharf and us. I saw Molly and Anne in the crowd and raised my hat, swinging it slowly back and forth. And as I looked into that fading throng, my heart leaped a little at the thought that perhaps she, Bernoline, might be standing there, come down for a last look — a quite irrational thought — yet I did feel her there, in that human mass, unrecognizable, now nothing more than a spotted shadow against the pier. Then the pier ran back into the oblivion of the city and the city faded into the sky.

I do not remember since boyhood to have felt the utter empty loneliness of life as at that moment. But a few months before I had been self-sufficient, a curious traveler, emerging from one experience, eager for others, satisfied and interested with the contact of my kind. Now, for what had come into my life in one short week, for an hour in the twilight, for a look given and taken, a voice remembered, I felt at once rudely lifted out of the companionship of men, doomed to carry with me a solitude from which there could be no escape.

In this weakness of the spirit I even rebelled against the call which took me back; the inexorable call of duty and honor which, after all, is only our yielding to what others may think of us: at least, in this moment of rebellion, this is what I feel! For, now that life has grown so precious to me, even though I but cling to ashes of hope, I wonder how in the coming days of battle I shall stand the test? Yet now that I write with a clearer discipline, a new feeling of reverence comes to me as I think on the men of France who fought beside me, with memories and hopes in their hearts. What others have done, I can do. All our vaunted courage is sometimes no more than that.

New York was but a haze in the distance as I stood by my brother's side, with the dread feeling of the irrevocable in life closing down on me, wondering when — where — and how, again?

As we stood there, a cabin boy hailed us: "Mr. Littledale? Special delivery for you, sir."

We both turned hastily.

"Which Mr. Littledale?"

"David Littledale, sir."

"That's right. It's for me."

I took the letter and at the first glance, though I had never seen her handwriting, I knew it was from Bernoline.

"David?"

Ben's hand closed over my wrist, and I looked up to see his eyes ablaze with jealousy and suspicion.

"David, show me that letter!"

I held it before him, and he gave it one wild look and turned away.

"Ben, old fellow, get hold of yourself!"

"I feel like jumping over and swimming for it," he said miserably.

"To-morrow you'll be thanking God from the bottom of your heart," I said, linking my arm under his. "Do you remember once when you came between me and making a fool of myself, and how we fought and rolled on the ground? Well, my turn, now. It's a queer world, and we've both got to grin and bear things. But it isn't a question of love, Ben. It's just been slavery, weak, unnatural, humiliating slavery. Better now than later!"

"Right! Sorry I made such an ass of myself. It's over, and, David, that's the last I'll ever see of her."

But I am not so sure of that.

The letter was crumpled in my hand. To have given courage to Ben gave me a sort of courage, which I sadly needed. I did not at once open and read it. I was afraid. I was afraid of a hundred nameless imagined fears, but most of all of the sure reaction I knew must come in her woman's heart, once the irresistible spell of our coming together had been broken. I went below, into the saloon, and laid her letter before me on the desk. Then, with a sudden inspiration, I found a sheet of paper and wrote:

Sailing down the Harbor

Bernoline, dear:

Your letter is here, before my eyes: and I am still afraid to open it. I shall not read it until I have written this. For I feel already what you will say. Bernoline, no matter what the obstacle which stands between us, it can alter nothing. While you live and I live, we are powerless to change what fate has laid upon us. As for me, just to know your love is to me so great a thing that if I had to choose again with open eyes, I would choose all I have suffered and all that may come to me, all the heart-burnings and all the daily, hourly longing, the cruelty of separation, — all just to have seen your eyes at parting. Be to each other what is right that we should be, — the rest is beyond our knowledge. I have strength for everything but one thing, — not to hear from you again.

DAVID.

Then I took up her letter, and read:

Midnight

Mon seul ami:

I have prayed on my knees for hours to see my way clear. For I no longer know myself. I, who thought myself so strong, have had so little strength. All that I have determined not to do, I have done. And yet, when you were at my side I could not do otherwise. When you are near me all my courage leaves me and I do not know what I do or say. And it is I who am so much older than you in experience and suffering who ought to protect you. But you, — is it not your whole life I am wrecking? Would it not be better to have you hate me than to do what I am doing? Is it not a great crime I am committing? For David, my dear David, — it *cannot* be. There is no hope for us, now, or ever. What shall I do? To-night, my heart is torn — I can not think. I have given my promise, and yet — Oh, David, I want to do what is best for you, and what seems cruel now may be the kindest later. I cannot decide. What shall I do? Have courage for us both. Be strong for me.

B.

I read this through once, with heavy heart, — then many times. To give her up was beyond my strength, though something within me admitted the truth of what she wrote. I took up my letter again, and added this postscript:

P. S. — I have read your letter, and I would not change a word of this. You leave the decision to me. I make it, and I take on my shoulders all that may come. I cannot do otherwise. I need your strength. I shall always need it. The fate that has sent us to each other is more mysterious than our little reason can fathom. Yet in it there must be some purpose. We can never harm each other. One thing is life; the other, worse than death. Write to me, dear little friend. Give me only what it is right for you to give me. I shall ask no more.

DAVID.

I put the letter into the bag myself and watched the pilot go over the side of the ship. Then, I went down to my cabin and got out my *poilu's* uniform. Another milestone passed.

PART IV

PART IV

I

Paris

SOME mysterious influence seems to be watching over me; perhaps Mr. Brinsmade, for his hand is powerful here, and a request from him would undoubtedly be honored. At any rate, on my return I found orders for me to report temporarily at the Bureau de la Presse as an interpreter. At any other time I should resent this, but now — frankly — I am glad, as I want to be able to transfer into the American service as soon as we declare war, and to be in Paris is to be where friends and influence can expedite matters. Ben goes into the Morgan-Harjes ambulance for six months, and leaves at the end of the week. He is more taciturn than ever, but the feeling of being in a great current, a man among men, is, I know, a great release to him. We have never discussed Letty since the day of our departure, when he gave me to understand that the separation was definite. I am still in the dark as to his real thoughts. Sometimes, I catch his glance on mine (quickly averted) and I wonder.

The coming back to it all, much to my surprise, was the most natural thing in the world. I felt no special thrill, no strangeness and (this surprised me) not the slightest revolt. In some ways it was a relief from my thoughts, from my own little existence battling against the currents of destiny.

Yet I except one moment, — the day of our landing at Bordeaux, when the shifting turns of my destiny were brought before me in a dramatic revelation. We were

at the rail, looking down on the tedious process of the tying up to the dock. A number of blue-gray recruits were straggling out of wine shops, lounging on the piers, watching our arrival. Suddenly, at the call of a bugle, the gray, loosely flung shadows contracted, took shape and alignment, became an entity. Another command and a hundred feet swung forward, a hundred arms rippled over one body, and an idea set to purpose passed up the street. A moment before they were identities, free as I still was; free to turn, to sit, to rise, to jump and to run; the next, all human semblance had sunk into the anonymity of a machine. It was glorious. It stirred me as nothing else has the power to stir the blood,—this groping become an idea, this confusion crystallizing into purpose, this visualization of man moving as history moves. Yet for that moment it terrified me with its actuality. For I felt the obliteration of all that had been for these last incredible weeks — David Littledale. Anonymity? Yes, as death may be anonymous, and number me into the ranks of the forgotten.

At Bordeaux, I bade Ben good-by and became once more Brigadier Littledale, Légion Etrangère, soldier of France. It is the dirt and the filth that are hard to accept,— the feeling of being of the cattle of war.

From there to Paris, in a steaming mass of human flesh, crowded into box cars. No longer the swinging enthusiasm of the mobilization; instead a comradeship become the ox-like acceptance of a fate which has fatigued the imagination into indifference. But the return is always hideous. At Paris, to the medical inspection, and the surprise of being detached and transferred. Perhaps the imminence of our entry into the war, which can be but a matter of days, is much in my good fortune.

My new detail gives me quite a little liberty, as some of my superiors are old friends of social days, and I am permitted to sleep at the hotel with Ben, who was astonished when I walked in. To-morrow we are going over to see Alan. I am a little apprehensive of how he will receive Ben. No letter yet from Bernoline. I write her each night and mail the letter at the end of the week.

Dined to-night with Ben at an out-of-the-way restaurant of older days, across the Seine, where boys of thirteen and fourteen masqueraded as waiters and gave us of the toll of death. My old *sommelier*, who always kept a special bottle for me (or made me think he did), is gone, dead in the fight around the Labyrinth. New faces everywhere. Afterwards we walked back, silently, across the blackened city, stumbling down old Paris towards the dim blur of a hooded light. Occasionally a star detached itself from the Milky Way and went wandering like a great firefly, where above us, a sentinel aeroplane patrolled the night.

We came back shoulder to shoulder, unseen to each other, in long stretches of silence. It is strange how little we can say to each other. I have not the slightest inkling to the ways of his mind. Sometimes I think him totally devoid of imagination. Perhaps I am wrong and in his inner shell his thoughts are active and relentless. His code is a strange one — very Anglo-Saxon — and I think he is still ashamed that once or twice I saw him in the raw. I of course never refer to Letty, though her presence is always between us. The nearest approach to intimacy is a dialogue like this:

"How are you to-day, Ben?"

"First rate."

"Nothing worrying you?"

"Nothing."

"You look more like your old self."

"Feel so."

"All right then, old fellow?"

"Quite."

And we are two human beings, brothers even, living from day to day and indifferent to the fates!

Whether the passion in him that Letty had fired has died out or is only smoldering, I have no way of knowing. I am inclined to think it is his pride that suffers most. I do not think there is any black resolve back of his mind. His imagination is not apt to run away with him. But, having written this, I wonder. He is a nature utterly incomprehensible to me, and daily contact seems to send him further away. I am living with a stranger.

II

THIS afternoon we saw Alan. I had sent him word of our arrival at Bordeaux, before I knew I should have the opportunity to see him. As a matter of fact, I was apprehensive of what might happen, for both Alan and Ben are strong-willed and direct to the point. But to my surprise the meeting passed off without incident. We sat down as though twenty years had not passed and the leader was not Alan nor myself, but Ben. We both felt it. From the moment he walked into the room, he was the older brother and tradition held.

It was a curious phenomenon, yet one that I have noticed before on meeting again some hero of school days; an idolatry does abide that nothing in the passage of human life can destroy. It is probably this reason — the need of revolting against a mastership once acknowledged

— that drives certain strong growing natures away from the dwarfing influences of the family.

Alan was alone when we entered, though Toinon came in shortly afterward.

"Well, Skipper, pretty banged up, aren't you?"

Ben had come in with outstretched hand, as though there had never been a cloud between them, and Alan, who had hung back at my first approach, found himself shaking hands, yielding, allowing himself to be ordered around by the man against whom he had steeled his heart.

"Well, how are you? You look pretty much slapped around but a damned sight better than I expected."

"Yes. Much better."

"Amazingly so, old fellow. You'll be out having a fling at the Boche before you know it."

And he did look better, though how much may have been the excitement of seeing us is a thing I do not know.

"Here. Stretch out in this chair. If there's any hustling to do, we'll do it. Coddle yourself there. Davy and I can find the tobacco. Nice diggings you have here."

At this moment Toinon came in, her market basket on her arm, and stopped short at sight of us.

"What shall I call her? Davy has told me about her," said Ben, rising.

"Toinon — Mademoiselle Toinon, if you like. *Toinon, ma mie, c'est mon frère Ben. Tu connais David. Viens ici.*"

She shook hands gaily, and passing to Alan, leaned over and kissed him, while Alan looked at us with a certain defiance.

"Don't carry a chip on your shoulder, Skipper," said Ben, knocking out the ashes from his pipe, while Toinon disappeared with her marketing.

"And if I married her?" said Alan stubbornly.

"Why? If you're happy," said Ben, shrugging his shoulders, "I'm sure that's your affair. And I say, Skipper — we're grown up, so let's quit scrapping." He sat down and stretched himself before the little wood fire and began to laugh.

"What's so funny?" said Alan suspiciously.

"Guess Davy can figure it out."

He grew suddenly solemn and laid his hand on my arm.

"Sometime, when I'm not around, you can tell him — you would, anyhow. Fact, Alan, I wasn't laughing at you. If you're good at guessing, that ought to shut you up. Let's talk of other things."

Toinon came and stood warming her ankles at the fire, looking down on the three of us. From her height she began to smile, in an amused way.

"You are alike as three ogres," she said, drawing her finger over her eyebrows, to indicate the characteristic Littledale line. "You will lunch with us?"

"Y-a de quoi manger, ma petite?"

"Mais, oui, et du bon vin."

Alan's voice was of a gentleness we had never heard. We offered to run out to a *charcutier,* but he would not hear of it and realizing that it might be a question of pride, we did not insist. There was no reason for our anxiety, for the lunch was delicious and under the mellowing influence of the extra bottle of wine the stiffness wore away. Yet the conversation was not exactly expansive.

"What made you get into it, Skipper?"

"More amusing than staying out. How about you?"

"Same with me."

"Davy said you were going in the ambulance."

"Just for a couple of months. I've been at Plattsburg. I'll strike for a commission as soon as we get in it."

Ben glanced at his watch and jumped up.

"Hello! Must be off." He shook hands punctiliously with Toinon. *"Déjeuner tres bon.* Good-by, Skipper. Any time I get a chance at Paris I'll look you up. Are you fixed all right for money?"

"Plenty."

"No offense. See you later, Davy."

He had been over an hour in the apartment, asked twenty questions, studied everything, and said nothing at all.

"Well, that's over," I said, with a laugh.

"Yes, damn his cool cheek; but you're as bad as I am; we sat there listening to him as though we were both twelve years old," he said, in his growling way.

"Habit, Alan. You see, Ben never has two ideas in his mind. Make a good officer."

"Probably. What was he hinting at? Domestic difficulties?"

Then I told him, omitting, of course, whatever concerned me personally.

"Yes, I see why he laughed," he said, when I had finished. "That was almost human. Is it possible, I wonder, that Ben has got a new point of view?"

"He is a clam, you know."

We had gone back to our chairs before the fireplace. I saw that Alan was quite puzzled over Ben's history.

"Thinking of Ben?"

"Yes. Never figured him out that way," he said meditatively. "You know, with all the antagonism he roused in me, I used to envy him his disposition."

"Envy!"

"Yes; I figured out a fellow like that would go on ambling through life, getting just about what he wanted from it, not worried by ideas or having much to struggle with. Guess I don't know so much about human nature, after all."

"There's a law of averages comes in, even with Ben."

"Suppose so. Did he take it hard?"

I nodded.

"Curious. I always thought of Ben as some robber baron of the Middle Ages. I'd sort of expect him to rig up a gallows and see justice done in good old mousquetaire fashion."

"Really?"

"Yes; I say, David, why the devil do we feel his leadership the way we do? We can think all around him. We've gone fifty years ahead of him."

"Funny. I've been puzzling over that, myself."

"Suppose men of action aren't necessarily thinkers. We turn around an idea, see the complexities; a decision with us is a mental process of elimination. With him, it is instantaneous — an instinct; the primitive. That's why I'd have thought he'd strangle her."

"Family feeling counts."

"Yes, you're right; felt that as we three were sitting here; felt it strong. And a year ago I would have laughed at it. It's so. I may champ at the bit, but I'm one of you Littledales, for all that."

Toinon brought in the coffee, slipped a pillow under his shoulders, and went back into the kitchen. He looked very like the *condottieri* of the Middle Ages he described, as he sat sunk in his chair, the dressing-gown loose on his thin frame, white bony hands locked under his chin, deep eyes and stubbled hair, gaunt and relentless.

"Davy, it would be queer if I pulled through, after all."

I looked up in surprise.

"Course you're going to! What an idea! Why, you took my breath away when I came in —"

"Honest?"

"Quite honest."

"You know a man like myself shouldn't fool himself," he said, staring into the fire. "To-day's a good day. But I do seem to be picking up. You know, I would like to live. I don't mind going, not at all. But — it's such an interesting world, I'd like to see what's going to happen, and — after."

He moved his hand in a feeble gesture, and the shadow it made crept across the sunlight that flooded the room.

"It's interesting when you've got to an impersonal point of view and you can stand and just look on. Youth is a sort of disease. I've lived through that fever, groped beyond my limitations, struggled with nightmares. It left some marks on me — not many. Funny, I feel just ready to begin life, now."

"I wish to God I could look at it that way," I said impulsively.

"What way, Davy?" he said, a little puzzled, and by that I knew that he had been talking, not to me, but to some shadowy self.

"Looking at things from the impersonal way."

I was making a pretense of emptying my pipe, and turning, I faced his sharp eyes.

"Want to talk it out, Davy?"

"Some day, perhaps. Not now."

"You're too young yet," he said, nodding. "You think in terms of yourself. Most of us do, and philosophy isn't going to help that."

"Right, there."

"Know what strikes me? We human beings have so damned little charity towards ourselves. All the institutions we've ever created — the Church, the State, Society; for we *have* created them — make us despise ourselves, — look down upon ourselves. For two thousand years we've got the conception that we are weak, crawling worms, originally sinful, predestined to evil. We've

been thundered at, frightened, cursed, and every agency has united to belittle us in our own eyes. And yet, Davy, look at the wonder of it; it's only a few thousand years since we were among the beasts of the field, groping in the darkness. And now, we have illuminated the night, ridden the air, sowed the earth, bridged the sea, abolished every impossibility, except the one thing — time. And it's not simply brain force, science, but the instinct towards a beautiful ideal, that's amazing in us; we've evolved a Parthenon out of placing one stone on top of another; we've blown into a seashell and imagined a modern orchestra; created literature, painting, the forms of government, and all in a few thousand years, despite this strange conception of our impotence and frailty. By Jove, sometimes I almost want to go and just lift my hat in reverence to my race!"

"What's going to happen after this war is over?" I said, interested in this revelation of Alan.

"Here?"

"Well, I was thinking of America. Been thinking a lot about it lately. You've had the chance to knock about as I haven't. What do you think is coming?"

"I'll answer you like this," he said, reaching for a pipe which he held a moment nervously in his teeth, champing on it as a horse does on its bit. "It's all complex till you look at it in just one way. Look at it as you would the forces of nature. Forces of human nature act just the same way. That is, if you can see them in the proper perspective.

"There's only one genuine aristocracy in the world today: that's Germany. It is a genuine force, because it does lead, is educated to lead. England is an aristocracy that is more or less artificial, struggling to hold the leadership it has inherited. And, Davy, I'm not so sure that Germany is going to be beaten."

"Well, I'll be damned —"

"Germany and the German idea are two separate things. You've got to beat her thoroughly if you want to get rid of the German conception of the State. Just a stand-off won't do that. Quite frankly, to me the tragedy to-day is that the German idea of government, the finest modern conception, has got to be stamped out because it is harnessed to this inhuman, bestial, conscienceless Prussianism. It is economically sound and morally wrong."

"Well, Alan, I don't think I can follow you there," I said, warmly. "Perhaps I hate them too much to see any good in them, but —"

"Good? Why, Davy, what are you going to put up against them? Your other civilizations, based on individualism, without responsibility, order, discipline, efficiency? Whatever you may think about it, Germany has a logical conception, worked out to the minutest detail. What have we? A government based on the theory of the consent of the governed. And who governs? Not the people — not the leaders we see — but something which remains in the shadows. We're plundered, we're wasteful, we're inefficient; we don't even know there is a science of government. Government annoys us. We conceive of the State as a big telephone central, a convenient policeman. It isn't an ideal; it isn't even a central idea to express all the future of a great democracy. Why talk of the State when we can't govern even a single city! No other nation in the world could go on like that without being gobbled up. But we go on because we see no visible danger. David, I sometimes wonder if it wouldn't be better for us if Germany did win, — just as it would bring us up short if we had the threat of a great civilization on our Mexican frontier."

"I grant that; but what if Germany doesn't win?"

"Then it won't be a question of what we've got to do but one of natural evolution. Let's go back to forces. Wherever you find the greatest force concentrating, there you'll find the ultimate power. What is a revolution but the shifting of the balance of power from an artificial force to a natural force? When the old order falters, weakens, sickens, it becomes an artificial control; the leadership is imposed and not genuine, and, you can put it down as an axiom that an artificial force is a force whose days are numbered. Society is like an iceberg. Eight ninths of it are under the surface, but when that upper minority dwindles below the line of safety, the submerged mass rises to the sky. We have a new peak but the balance remains the same. That's all."

"I see what you're driving at," I admitted reluctantly, for his method recalled to me the haunting prophecies of Peter Magnus.

"We've had the king idea and the aristocratic idea, and both theoretically were good ideas so long as you had the intelligent despot and the class that had the right to lead; and those ideas were practical ideas, so long as they were concentrated, unified, and efficient. Decay, before revolution, destroyed them. Then you've had the rise of the middle class, and remember this in all fairness, Davy, each class has always ruled in its own interest. Now, in America what class or force is there that is unified, concentrated and efficient to carry out its decisions?"

"Labor, and labor alone," I said, following in his thought.

"Something greater than agitation has done it. It's the course of modern civilization, — machinery. It began with the first invention. To-day it is an accelerating force. Ten thousand cobblers scattered through a State are not a political force, but ten thousand workers in a shoe factory are. They live together, they think together,

they become politically conscious. Davy, answer this to yourself: can you honestly believe there is anything going to prevent a class that has the power, that knows it has the power, from finally exercising that power, in the same way and for the same ends that every other social movement has acted?"

"No, not as you put it; not as I see it now."

"Why deceive ourselves? What is the meaning of a strike? More wages, better conditions? Not fundamentally. Every strike is one step onward in the solidification of a new political force, — a skirmish before the final battle."

"Then you, too, think that the old order is passing?"

"Passing! It started the day universal suffrage was proclaimed. I suppose now you'll ask me if I believe in democracy?"

"I confess I am wondering."

"Ask me if I believe in machinery! Why debate on what is an accomplished fact? Why ask if a river should move in its course? If machinery was inevitable, so democracy was inevitable. We have proclaimed universal suffrage; now we must watch it work out to its logical conclusion. We've been proclaiming one thing and doing another for generations. Now, we're going to find out."

"Socialism, then?"

"Not necessarily. The rise of a new force; a perfectly natural appetite for power, that's all. Ideas are always translated into appetites. The Girondins were a body of idealists, and the Revolution they produced immediately devoured them. As a matter of fact, men in the mass do not want anything different from men as privileged individuals; only they want the luxury for themselves, and when they are strong enough they seize it, — to live first and then to enjoy life in a big and bigger way, — the pur-

suit of happiness, if you wish. Just as strong in the mass as with us."

"I'll agree this much, Alan," I said, "though I know much of what you've said is true: our American failure has been the failure to produce a continuing class of leadership. If those who are born to lead, who ought to be educated to lead, won't lead, they must take the consequences. And I'm hitting my own kind!"

"Particularly as others are preparing to take that leadership."

When I left, I put out a hand with a genuine admiration and affection.

"Well, Alan, it's pretty late to be finding it out, isn't it, but I'm glad I've really got to know you."

"Oh, that's all right," he said gruffly, but pleased nevertheless. "Drop around. Lots more to be settled in the old world. I say, Davy, I wonder what Ben would have thought of my heresies?"

We broke into a hearty laugh at this, and I went out.

When I reached the hotel, I sat down and wrote out a little of the conversation to Bernoline. For I am anxious to know what she, with every instinct opposed, will say to it.

"Queer duck, Alan," said Ben that night at table. "How long did you stay?"

"About an hour or two."

"Could you get him to talk?"

"Yes, he opened up quite a bit."

"Don't like his dying there, like a dog. We ought to get him home."

"I'm afraid you'll find him rather obstinate."

"Don't like it."

"I think we'd better accept him on his own terms."

"Don't like it. Don't like his dying in a hole. Don't like the woman."

"Are we our brother's keeper?"

"Well, at least, we ought to have a good doctor in."

"I've thought of that."

I arranged for Doctor Murchison, a man I knew at Neuilly, to go over and make a thorough examination, cautioning him about dispelling illusions. His report, as I feared, leaves little hope; the lungs are badly affected. It can be only a question of time.

Ben went off to-night.

III

At last her letter! It was waiting for me on the little table in the hall, among the mail from home. I went up the stairs breathlessly, without waiting for the elevator, and shutting myself in, read it again and again.

Mon ami:

I have waited a whole week since receiving your letter, for I wanted time to think, to think calmly and deliberately. It was wrong for me to leave the decision to you, as I did. I alone must bear the responsibility, for I alone know all the facts, don't you see? I shall write you, as I promised, and as my heart would have it, — until God brings you safely through this war.

David, I do this with many misgivings, and my doubts will always be with me. If, some later day, in your spirit, you may reproach me and wonder at my lack of courage (some day, *mon ami,* you will do so, and that will be my punishment) remember this, that I should never have weakened as I have done, if it were not that you are going again into this hideous war. All that I have told myself this long week, all my arguments, are as nothing when I say to myself that death will be

your companion by day and by night. Even if some day you should blame me in the bitterness of your heart, I can do no otherwise, — no woman could. I do not matter, — you ask for my strength. It is yours.

And now, *mon ami,* only one thing can justify the decision I have made, freely and not impulsively; the feeling that if God in some mysterious way has willed that I should come into your life, that it is not to weaken you, not to sadden you, but to give you strength and courage and that for knowing all the faith I have in you, you will rise to the big things.

I have such a high ideal for you, *mon ami.* I know your strength and I know what you need. I feel about you a certain weakness — perhaps weakness is too strong a word — a certain longing for what a woman, a real woman, can give to you. You do not speak what is in your heart easily, — never to friends. It is through another that you will discover yourself. Some men are sufficient to themselves and, if they do not know the greatest happiness — for women seldom love them — they are saved from much sorrow. You are not like that, David. You are sensitive to every impression and you need happiness really to find all the qualities of the heart that are waiting to be called forth. I could not bear the thought of your marrying the wrong woman.

For you are not meant to go through this world alone. It may seem strange, incomprehensible to you, that I can hold you so dear and yet look forward with such hope to your marrying some lovely young girl, like Anne Brinsmade, to complete your life. Yet it is so. It is the maternal in me, *mon ami,* that you always appeal to, David, since I have no right to the other. Let me then be in your life all that means hope and faith and ambition, during this period of trial, and if you wish to make me feel some little happiness in what I do, let me know that nothing I have done will ever weaken your courage or prevent your seeking the happiness to which every man has a right. Let us keep then a nobility of spirit, *mon ami,* and without rebellion or sadness, face life as God in his fuller knowledge has willed to prove us.

B.

When I had read this through the first time — tumultuously — seeking to absorb it in one breath, I read it through again, slowly, stopping at every sentence, sometimes with every sense thrilling, sometimes with a black revolt against the obstinate struggle for a repression that I knew was not in her heart. I searched every phrase for a significance that might be concealed beneath the words, alternately high with hope and again given over to despair. When I had read her letter for the fifth time, I laid it on my lap and abandoned myself to my thoughts. It had become so dark in my little bedroom that I could no longer distinguish her handwriting. Outside, over the young green of the trees, past the fading foliage of the Champs Elysées, the golden dome of the Invalides was paling in the sifting in of the dust. It is the hour of all the day to which I am most sensitive, the hour, when shared, which brings a tenderness to the heart that raises us triumphant above the riot of the city, but an hour, when faced alone, that oppresses the imagination and weighs it down with the futility of hoping against the inevitable, when memories of vanished happiness are too acute and separation intolerable.

I rose hurriedly, lit my candle and drew the curtains. How many emotions thronged into my heart as I sat down at my table and turned her letter in my hands; the soft blue paper, with the thin and rounded handwriting, that was all Bernoline, — order, discipline and delicacy. My first impulse was to take up the chronicle of my days and write to her while the mood was strong. I remained an hour staring at an empty page, unable to phrase a thought. And, even now, what is in my mind? There are moments when I face the truth without wavering, and tell myself that her instinct is right, that there is no outcome possible for me, that I am wilfully, blindly plunging ahead into an entanglement which will wreck my whole

life; that I am wrong in overcoming her determination and forcing a situation which is against her intuitions, — and where, of course, she must suffer as much as I shall. For in her tradition there is no escape even from the most hideous of marriages.

The idea of her being married is unbearable to me, and I revolt against the inhumanity and immorality of such enforced slavery. At the thought of her sensitive, fragile spirit at the brutal whim of a husband she loathed — No, I cannot bear to dwell on what may have happened: thank God, her body, at least, is now free. Perhaps that is the explanation of her anonymity and her terror of retaining even a trace of her past identity.

As I write, an extraordinary thought flashes into my mind, —extraordinary because, strangely enough, it has never occurred to me before; are there children in her life, too? I remember, now, how she shrank from the touch of Master Jack that morning on the boat when we told fairy tales. Can it be possible? And why has such a supposition never occurred to me before? And yet — no — I do not think this possible. It is possible that there may have been a child, but not that there is a child that is living to-day; no, that is quite unthinkable! For with her faith, her clear sense of duty, her acceptance of sacrifice, — no, that is impossible, quite impossible!

At least there is this consolation to me, sitting here alone and separated by time and distance; I know how profoundly her heart has gone out to me; that despite all her traditions, she has been unable to close the door and put me out of her life. Whatever the waiting, to know that is to have something to cling to. Who knows? This war in which my own life must be risked, may free us both!

Now that I can think more sanely, and that every word of hers is written in my memory, thank God that there is only one feeling in my heart, and that for her. What am I to pit my sorrows against hers? I shall do as she asks of me. No written word of mine shall ever cause her a regret or a pain, if I can help it. And that will not be easy, for it means a constant struggle, a constant check on every impulse.

After all, are not my little reasonings quite futile? What must be, will be. We have ventured unwittingly from the safe shallows into the great tumult of life and destiny, and it will bear us where it wills. So, why debate and wonder?

In the same mail came a letter from Anne. Only a few pitiful words, — but reading them has broken me all up:

This is not a letter, David: just a message. I am so sorry. If I could only make it easier to bear. Bless you.

ANNE.

April

At last! Yesterday America declared war. It is my fight now. I shall be transferred, at once.

I went over to Alan's in the afternoon and found him in a high pitch of excitement, insisting on going out to see the city. I argued with him, fruitlessly, for he would have his way. So we bundled him up, and Toinon and I helped him down the stairs, and, with him between us in the back seat of a lazy fiacre, we went forth into the delirious city. Flags everywhere, and everywhere, thank God, the Stars and Stripes! Where they came from, heaven knows: they blossomed out like dandelions after

a rain, in the most unexpected places, — orthodox and home-made; flags constructed of hastily-ripped-up skirts and comforters, the stripes and stars confused: but what did it matter! I think all the crowded panoply of the boulevards did not give us half the thrill that we received at the sight of one clumsy, grotesque banner swinging above a butcher shop on the Rue des Quatre-vents, with its green-blue stripes and its wabbly white stars hastily sewn on. Alan was in uniform and I in my blue-gray, and everywhere it was:

"Bravo, les Americains!"

"Vive l'Amerique!"

We stayed out until dark: nothing could induce him to return sooner.

"Why, good Lord, Davy, this is doing me more good than all the doctors in Paris," he exclaimed fretfully. "This is something to live for. I'll be cured and back in a couple of months. You'll see. You must apply for a commission for me. I know more about artillery than half their dinky West Pointers. I can start in a little light work; there'll be a lot of instructing necessary. What do they say? Will the army be sent over here to train?"

I humored him, hoping against hope that the mental incentive might produce the miracle. But, once before the test of the long stairs to be climbed, the inexorable force of reality dispelled our hasty illusions. We helped him as best we could up four flights, and up the last, without resistance from him, I carried my brother in my arms. He had a dreadful spell of coughing that left him shaken and limp, and for the first time, I believe, he guessed the truth.

For when we had him at last in bed, and it was time for me to go, he caught my hand, and cried rebelliously:

"Good God; I haven't got to die now, have I?"

IV

June, At the Front

I AM back in active service at last. Lieutenant Littledale, attached as *officier de liaison* with the ——th Division de Fer, French Army, thanks to De Saint Omer, now Commandant on the staff of General La Pierre. We are constantly together. My record was against me — the leg still has a limp and I am under weight — and the best I could have hoped for was to be used in a training school. So, when De Saint Omer suggested being attached to the French, I jumped at the chance.

Hope is running high: a new offensive is in the air. Several American officers have come to us on a visit, and the stories they bring of preparations at home are very heartening. The presence of the American uniform works miracles among the troops.

Letters are fearfully delayed. I have a helpless feeling that half of them never reach me. It has been a month since I have had word from Bernoline. The last news was that she had gone as companion in the family of the Barristers. It gave me a strange feeling. I know them; they are cousins of Anne's, and I am happy that she at least is with friends. Anne has written me every week. Ben is in the aviation.

A week later

To-day Maurice de Saint Omer told me of the death of his brother in the early days of the war. He was a young lieutenant, just twenty-two, and was in command of a section that was to go over the top at dawn.

It was in the early days of the stabilized war of the

trenches, when men went to certain slaughter on account of the lack of proper artillery protection, and when to win a few strategic yards, hundreds of men had to be sacrificed as a screen.

The section of trench which the young lieutenant held was absolutely at the mercy of the Boche machine guns. To obey the order meant the death of every man who went over the top. He debated his duty all through the night and in the morning, half an hour before the appointed time, he called his men together and said:

"The attack is to be general, all up and down the line. Therefore, no account can be taken of local conditions. You can understand that. There can be no army without obedience and discipline. But I cannot find it in my heart to sacrifice every life here. Therefore, at the hour, I go over the top alone."

They pleaded with him, but he remained firm as he saw his duty; wrote his farewell to his brother, embraced his men, and, when the time came, went over the top, and — was killed instantly.

"It is a story to be told after the war," said De Saint Omer, in conclusion. "Technically, of course, he was wrong — but it was like the boy to pay the price!"

He told it without emotion that I could see. In fact, all personal feeling has left him completely. The old feeling of family and race gives him an impassivity and a detachment of sacrifice which is beyond my understanding. No one would recognize now the dandy of Paris. His hair is gray, his face gaunt and wrinkled, but he never loses either his faith in the outcome or the Gallic quality of gaiety to the end. Yet, when he makes a decision, nothing can swerve him. He hates the Boches with a burning, unholy hatred (there is some tragic story about his family and particularly his mother which some day

I think he will tell me), and yet, when it is a question of some captured officer, he is punctilious to the extreme in his courtesy. *Noblesse oblige!*

July

Back from the Chemin des Dames affair to hear of my father's death in the month of May. I have, of course, expected it from day to day. Yet now that it has come, it brings home to me what will some day come to me, as nothing else has done. Then, too, I have the feeling of suddenly stepping into the front rank and looking into vacancy — a feeling of others crowding at my back — and I ask myself, incredulously, if thirty years is now my allotted span. Strangely enough, I don't think of what may happen here.

July, In Rest Camp

Letters from home; from Anne, Molly and two from Bernoline. I had almost forgotten the existence of that other world: not its existence, but its power to reach out to me. The Champagne offensive has been a ghastly failure, terrible blunders committed, useless sacrifices. We all feel it and the *poilus*, too, are not deceived. At the close of a brave, gossipy letter of Bernoline's about the war frenzy at home, a passage that I have read over three times, — one that I do not comprehend.

When you write me, David, that you can never think of me but as a woman to whom every good act is instinctive, — how sadly you misjudge me. David, this very ideal you have of me makes me examine my conscience so restlessly. Don't idealize me. See me as I am, — a very human and weak woman, who falls far short of the ideal you raise of her. No, *mon ami*, the way is not clear before me, nor do I know yet what I shall do. If you knew how I am tortured by remorse at times, I who write to you of duty and sacrifice, — who am

I to preach to you! I try to say to myself that whatever God has sent to me in this world, it is His will, as He sees the good of my soul. If He tries me, it is for His purpose. And yet, with all my struggling, I do not accept it. I cannot; God have pity on me!

It is hard to know the right, when others are involved. I should not write down this moment of weakness, when all I should mean to you is courage and fortitude. David, if you ever pray, pray for me in these coming months. Would that I could open my heart to you.

B.

What a terrible disaster it has been in Champagne. And you have been in it! Your last letter spoke of your being attached to General La Pierre's staff. I have had you in my thoughts every moment.

It is the first time she has written me so. I am quite puzzled. What can such a clear, direct nature know of remorse?

Ben was killed at the front on the eighth of July. He brought down an enemy plane and fell into a trap. His machine came down in flames, near X——. We were not thirty miles away.

Did he do it deliberately, or not? I shall probably never know for, if he did, he would never leave a hint of it. Yet I do not think he deliberately threw his life away. It was not his way of playing the game. Letty is in Paris. I shall have to see her.

I wonder if Ben left a letter behind him and if that letter will tell me what I dread to know at the last.

It is hard to write. I can only jot down a few incoherent notes. Actuality dominates and oppresses me. I have again the old feeling of having surrendered my imagination and of moving like an automaton.

August

No letter from Bernoline in ages. Others come — from Anne and Molly, but a blank door of silence is between us. I think I shall write no more in this chronicle. I have a weariness and a distaste for life outside.

V

Paris, September

I AM here for three days' *permission*. At the hotel a packet of letters, from every one except from — her!

Molly is married! I cannot believe it and yet the evidence is before me in two letters.

August, 1917.

Dear David:

Molly has, of course, written you of her marriage. I know that she is tremendously upset over what you will think of it. And, remembering some of the things you said, I am a little afraid, too. But I know you too well, David, to fear that you will ever write anything to hurt her. For she needs all your love and you are the only one now that counts with her in the loneliness of the situation she must face. Remember, whatever you may think, Molly never did this impulsively, but from the highest sense of her duty to share in the anguish that this war must bring. And, David, — you men may have one way of looking at it (the chivalry of the American, God bless him) but every real woman will understand Molly. And, David, could I say more than this: despite all that may come, and it is fearful to think what may come, if I write the truth and you can understand, — I envy her.

There were some things about it that were so fine that, whether we agree with her or not, I want you to know what a trump your little sister is.

She came over to spend a week with me and begged me not to ask questions, and to let her quite alone. Naturally, I suspected, particularly when she went off every afternoon for long walks and shut herself up in her room the rest of the time. So the third day I went to her and, putting my arm around her, I asked if I couldn't help her.

"No," she said very quietly, "this is something I must decide absolutely by myself."

"Of course, I know what it is, dear," I began, hoping to get her to talk. "Don't you think some one who loves you might help you to see clearer?"

She shook her head.

"No. No one should take the responsibility of deciding my life. Even if Davy were here, and you know what he means to me, I should do this alone. When I've made up my mind I'll tell you."

At the end of the week, she told me that she was engaged to Mr. Seaver and had made up her mind to marry him before he left with his Division for France. I admit that I hadn't expected this and my breath was rather taken away.

"But, Molly, have you thought over all this may mean to you?" I said at once.

"Yes."

"You may have to begin life all over, dear, alone, perhaps as a mother, — and you are only nineteen."

"I have thought that all out."

"Are you sure that it isn't a desire simply to do a hard thing that is influencing you?"

She shook her head.

"No. I did want to be sure of that, — to be fair to him. Now I know. If I love him I should marry him. It is his right and my right. If anything is going to happen to him, I am going to share it as his wife. Anything else is cowardice. That's the way I feel about it."

Of course, after that there was nothing more to do about it, except to take her in my arms.

David, I have never seen any one quite like her. She made *up* her mind and she quietly carried through her will, despite

every one and everything. And, David, I do believe it was her idea alone. For when Mr. Seaver came, he looked all broken up. He is very young, of course, and perhaps Molly does idealize him, but he is the sort of man you could trust and it is easy to see that he adores the ground she walks on.

How Molly carried it through I cannot imagine, but she did, somehow or other. She made every one do as she wanted and that by just quietly reiterating her decision. Your mother was terribly opposed to it, for they *are* young and Mr. Seaver has still his way to make. His parents were terribly distressed, and the father telegraphed Mrs. Littledale and came down with his son in tow. There was a family conference, with all concerned present and every one excited and expostulating, — every one except Molly.

And what do you think happened? In the midst of the uproar who should walk in but your Aunt Janie, and straight up to Molly and put her arm around her, — which was the only time your sister came near breaking down.

"If this is a question of Molly's marrying, why am I not consulted?" she said indignantly.

Molly told me that only three or four times in her life has your Aunt Janie asserted herself, and then she frightened the wits out of every one.

"Who is this gentleman? Is this the father of Mr. Seaver?"

The presentations were hastily made.

"Do I understand, sir, that you are opposing the marriage of my niece to your son?"

"I am," said Mr. Seaver, wavering a little before her eyes (but I think, also, Molly had won him over). "So I conceive my duty."

"You ought to go down on your knees and thank God, sir, that your son has the chance to marry any one as brave and true and loyal as my niece."

"But, good Lord, ma'am, I've no objection to their being engaged," he said hastily, "only I don't want them to marry now."

"Why?"

"My son's too young."

"He's old enough for his country."

"Frankly, I don't think it is fair to your niece! Who knows what may happen!"

"That's her affair. Any other objections?" she continued, as though she had dismissed all that had been offered before.

"Janie, what are they going to live on?" said your mother at this point.

"Exactly. My son hasn't a cent," said Mr. Seaver, plucking up courage.

"I beg your pardon?"

"My son hasn't a cent," repeated Mr. Seaver, but he must have quailed under the awful look Molly tells me your aunt gave him at this.

"Have you?"

The father's jaw must have dropped at this, for he was so astonished that he had nothing more to say.

"I am going to make my meaning so plain that no one can misunderstand it," she said, very thin, and tall, and aroused. "If your son is willing to give his life for his country, and my niece is ready to pledge her life to him, sir, and face the consequences, — if these young people see their duty and do it, we are going to stand back of them and see them through! That's as much our duty as going out to fight. And now, don't let me hear any more of this nonsense. Molly shall marry your son, and you and I will take care of her until he gets back from the war. If you won't, I intend to do it myself!"

Molly broke down at this. Your mother threw up her hands and capitulated and, in the confusion, Ted Seaver's voice was heard, saying:

"Governor, it's up to you."

Mr. Seaver went over to Molly and said solemnly:

"Young lady, every word your aunt has said is gospel. I'm thoroughly lambasted and convinced and mighty glad of it. Go ahead. We *will* see you through. Molly dear, — will you have me for a father-in-law?"

And married they were, with every one present and adoring *Molly*. Mr. and Mrs. Seaver, who were quite won over,

wanted her to come to them, but she chose to stay at Littledale, mainly on account of Aunt Janie, and maybe also from pride.

But now that she is alone, I think the full realization has come to her of what is ahead and though her pride will never let her admit it, at times her dear little face is awfully serious. You are her ideal, David. Be generous.

Father is in Europe. Have you seen him? The war feeling is wonderful. All the men are going and all the women are making ready to help. I am not satisfied with what I am doing here in the local Red Cross and have made up my mind to go to New York and train for a nurse's assistant. Mother is opposed but I, too, must decide things. She has agreed on condition that I shall find a companion. It seems rather unnecessary but if it will make her happy I shall do it. I go to-morrow to stay with some cousins. Later on, I am determined to go over but I'm not saying anything about that now. I do appreciate your writing to me, David, as you do, and don't ever think you have to hide things from me.

Bless you,
ANNE.

P.S. — I know you'll stand by Molly.

P.P.S. — It is a very great inspiration to know any one so fine as Molly, who looks things so straight in the face and never hesitates. It has done something for me that I shall never forget.

Littledale, August

My own big Brother:

I married Ted Seaver three days ago and to-morrow he leaves for his camp. I do not know when I shall see him again. I have married him knowing that he may never come back to me. I thought it all over very hard, and when I knew I loved him I insisted that I should have the right to share with him whatever sacrifice he may have to face.

I am a little afraid of what you will think just at first, David, dear, and oh, I don't want you to misunderstand. I didn't do it impulsively or just out of a weak sentimentality.

You do know and trust me, don't you, better than that. When I came to realize how much I loved him, it was only the right and simple thing to do. At first it was rather hard convincing others — all except Aunt Janie, who was a tower of strength — but in the end every one saw my point of view and respected it. I don't think they all agreed with it, but they did respect it, — and that is all I can ask, isn't it? For, Davy, with my three brothers gone, I couldn't flinch, could I, and take the easy way out? Davy, dear, there is of course one thing I can't explain to you and yet it's all, and that is the way I love my husband. It's just one of those things you can't speak about, and that you'll have to try to understand, for everything else is so simple when you understand that.

I feel ten years older than the day, you remember, when we sat and talked in the blue sitting room and I was so broken up about Ted's proposing. I know now that I did care, —only I didn't know. I didn't realize what I wanted in life, nor all the finer quality in him. We have seen each other a great deal, written to each other a great deal, and the knowledge that I loved him came to me gradually, not all at once. I knew what a serious thing I was doing, and do believe that I thought it over from every side.

I shall be quite truthful with you, Davy. If it were not for the war, I should have wanted to wait for a year, maybe two, — not because I didn't know that I could love him but because I wanted to be more of a woman, to be of greater help to him as his wife.

Will you understand? Please do, dear, even if, just at first, you are terribly upset, as I'm afraid you're going to be. You will trust your little sister this far, won't you, to know that the man she gives her life to is worthy to be your brother. Please do, even if you can't approve of me, all at once. Dear Davy, I wish you were here to-night, to catch me up in that great bear hug of yours. I need it. I have been two days writing this, and Ted went back this afternoon.

Your old Peggoty, who loves you,

MOLLY.

When I read these two letters and thought of Aunt Janie (it was like her, never to refer to the captain she didn't marry) and dear old Molly, a lump was in my throat. And, though it was a shock, there was only one thing I thought of and that was what a little Spartan my sister was. I rushed out and sent her the following cable:

God bless you. With you from start to finish. Bully for Aunt Janie!

VI

November, Paris

Dear David: *New York*

I have been here a month, staying with my cousins, the Barristers. You remember Nina, who was such a wild scatterbrain: well, she has settled down into the most matter-of-fact, quietest little worker in the world. You would never know her. She is up at six each morning and off to her work in the Women's Auxiliary Corps, has given up all her society interests and looks with scorn upon her old friends. I think she has shamed at least a dozen of her old social set into service work with her point-blank way of saying: "Well, what are *you* doing in the war?"

At that, it isn't quite fair, because the country is wonderful. No matter what is asked of it, it gives immediately and impulsively. I'm doing my part to prepare myself for service abroad when the time comes. I know father will oppose, but I have made up my mind and I shall go.

David, there is the loveliest little French woman here as companion to Nina, — a Mademoiselle Duvernoy, and my heart has gone right out to her. Every one adores her and I think it is her influence that has made Nina over. There is some story back of her deep, sad eyes, I know. You will never get me to believe she is not a gentlewoman born and bred. I don't know when I have gone so impulsively to any one. Just

to be with her makes life, the right way of living, the things that do count, seem the simplest things in the world. I loved her from the first day we sat and talked together over the womanhood of France, and I think she was drawn at once to me, for she put out her hand and laid it over mine and said:

"Mademoiselle, you have a very big and beautiful nature. It is the suffering and the responsibilities that will bring it out in you and make you worthy some day to be a great inspiration to a true man. We women are not our best or happiest when we are denied the hard things in life. And that is where life is so different for one in your position, for those who love you can hurt you most."

She said it so sweetly and her eyes had such understanding and such gentleness in them that I said:

"Mademoiselle Duvernoy, I don't think I ever wanted anything more in the world; will you really be my friend?"

"I have wanted to from the first," she said. "Perhaps we can be of help to each other."

Help her? How can I help her, except by loving her, and every one does that, — but I know what she can mean to me.

Later

I spoke of you to-day, and, to my surprise, she told me that she had crossed on the steamer with you and father. Do you remember her? I am sure you do, for no one can forget her. I have asked her to come with me as my friend and companion, for Nina really doesn't need her. To my surprise and delight, she answered:

"Mademoiselle Brinsmade, I shall do so with all my heart."

I do know she is drawn to me, too, for there were tears in her eyes as she said it. I know the Barristers won't want to let her go, but it is decided between us.

I laid the letter down, too moved to go on. Bernoline with Anne! Every thought that must have been in her *heart, I think*, came instantly into mine at that moment.

Is there any depth of sacrifice and generosity before which her loyal nature would recoil? Never have I felt more deeply the sublimity of sacrifice in woman. How can I find it in my heart to rebel against her evident purpose? For I know that what she has done has been done for my sake in a spirit of self-effacing loyalty to my happiness as she conceives it. Thank heaven that I know at least that she is well and with those who love her. Yet why has she ceased to write me?

Bernoline with Anne! No, I don't resent it; though I still cannot comprehend it. Why it should be so, I don't know, yet a feeling of great calm and certainty has come to me since I have known it, that and a feeling of humble reverence before something that shames me in my own tempestuous revolt against the loneliness that has been on me. Good God, how I love her, yet almost without hope, as some dear vision that I have only the right to worship from afar!

Paris

How could I have doubted her for a single moment! I have been to the bank, and there were her letters awaiting me, and on each written directions to hold until my arrival. I tore open the first hurriedly, for the explanation of this mystery. It was there in the first.

My dear Friend:

I cannot send you my letters to the front and I have for a long time debated whether I should even continue writing you. For, David, among those with whom you are now in daily contact there might be some who would recognize my handwriting, and I have not the right to run that risk. You are too loyal ever to seek the explanation in your imagination, as I am loyal to the promise I gave you and which a hundred times has ser-

tured my conscience. But even in conversation never, never refer once to having met even the Mademoiselle Duvernoy you knew on the steamer, for you might bring a sorrow too awful to contemplate on those I must protect. Even this I ask of you — destroy every letter I have written you. Do not question, *mon ami,* do not seek to penetrate this mystery. And oh, David, if by any unthinkable accident you might guess at the truth, for my sake I ask it, — keep the knowledge to yourself. Yes, even from me, dear friend. I must ask this of you blindly, and without question, and I do so in perfect faith.

Blindly, and without question: yes, I shall obey her. But the imagination, — that is another thing. A hundred suppositions have rushed through my head, for I have written the names of a dozen of the officers whose mess I share, and there is one, a young captain from Brittany, François d'Hauteville, who, strangely, has reminded me many times of her, in coloring and in the breeding that I know is hers, — in the very quality of his voice. Is it possible that I have been living day after day with her own flesh and blood and never divined it! Control my imagination — how is it possible!

I rushed through the other letters and impatiently took up the last one.

Dear Friend:

You have probably heard from Miss Brinsmade of the way we met at her cousin's and of my decision to go to her. I think, David, you will have guessed the reasons that have dictated my decision. Believe me that it is a great happiness to be so close to some one who is dear and necessary to you. Since I have known her a new confidence in the future has come to me. How could I resist her? There is something so instantly winning in her impulsive kindness, her brave struggling determination to be of some service, and the so evident

need of a woman's love and faith. With everything against her, a false education, the incitement to pleasure, the mistaken affections of those who love her best and who would make life only a long self-indulgence; with all against her, David, it is wonderful how the deeper things in her — the instincts of the real woman — have made her seek her own salvation. The real impulse, *mon ami,* make no mistake about it, is her love for you and the longing to stand high in your estimation. Such an aspiration is a precious thing, David, — a trust that you must never shatter.

I have talked many times with her and I love her. She does need something that I can give her, thank God, — and to feel that, is something that means everything to me in this period of great indecision. It is a mission that I shall perform very reverently, and for your sake.

B.

I have told her only that I crossed on the steamer with you. Send your letters always to the Convent, and I shall get them there. Dear David, don't begrudge me this little opportunity for real service. I am happier to-day than I have been in years, for I do believe that in some mysterious way Providence has granted me the opportunity to help others to a great happiness. This, *mon ami,* compensates for everything.

When I had read this, a feeling of helplessness again came to me. It is one thing to combat an enemy, but how resist the quiet, self-sacrificing determination of the one you love and who loves you! From the first I have known that in Bernoline's presence my will would always yield to her inflexible view of duty. Her moral supremacy over me was immediate, and I have never questioned it. I accepted it as I accept it now, — as a faith. Yet not for a moment have I relinquished hope, even though that hope is indefinable and confused and lost in future speculation. There must be some future happiness in this world that can be shared together, otherwise —

VII

Paris, December

DOWN on the sad duty of burying my brother, Alan. How strangely life and death are mingled in this swift impulse of war; Ted Seaver — Captain Seaver, now — who informed me of Alan's last moments, told me too of Molly's coming motherhood. One generation gone, and another arriving!

We walked back together from the cemetery across Paris, and he opened his heart to me. At first, it was difficult. There is a certain restrictive bar that interposes when there is this intimacy of family connections. It is easier, often, to unburden one's self to a stranger. Alan's death had upset him more than it had me, in my acquired fatalism. It was his first contact with the closed mystery and as always, I think, his thoughts had leaped ahead to his own appointed hour. Yet in this supposition I had not entirely done him justice.

"God, how terrible death is!" he broke out nervously, at last.

"It's not death; it's life you're experiencing," I said solemnly.

"What do you mean?"

"Life, Ted, is just this: readiness to face the end at any moment, our own and those who are dear to us. We aren't taught these things at home: nothing prepares us. We can't believe it till it comes, as a shock."

"Yes, that's so," said the boy, pulling at his cuff, for he is only a boy. "I can't get it out of my mind; I feel jumpy all over."

"It's tough, damned tough."

"Mr. Littledale," he said abruptly, "do you blame me for marrying Molly as I did?"

"No-o," I said slowly.

"For, you see, that's what breaks me up. The thought of her, of what's coming, of what will be ahead of her, — if anything happens to me."

"Naturally, you can't help thinking of such things," I admitted. "You see, Ted, there is some logic in the military point of view that wants an officer single, isn't there?"

"Good heavens, yes. I keep thinking of it all the time, and — wondering."

"Wondering what?"

"What I'll do when I get out there, — out at the front," he said, drawing a long breath.

We were walking through the crowded section, near the Place de la Bastille. I touched his arm and drew his attention to the crowds.

"See there; do you know what war has meant to them? Do you realize, Ted, that your lot is the general lot, and that the real sacrifice is there, — in those who remain. Are we privileged to choose our way of service to our country? No. *Noblesse oblige.* Remember that, Ted; it answers everything."

"You're right," he said, straightening up at once. "But it wasn't myself I was caring about, it — it's Molly."

"Molly is no longer my sister or your wife. Molly has gone beyond us; she represents now something bigger and finer, the spiritual heritage of American womanhood."

"Then you don't blame us?" he said.

"No, of course not. I shouldn't have had the courage, perhaps, but you of the younger generation are right. Meet life as it offers itself: it's a bigger thing than avoiding it."

"Thank you; that does a lot of good," he said, drawing a long breath.

He is of another generation, as is Molly, too, — God bless her. And what I said to him I believe. May it be a generation more significant and responsive than my own! I think it will, for it has been blessed with two things, opportunity and the test of suffering.

PART V

PART V

I

April, 1918

For weeks, ever since the staggering nightmare of the German thrust in March, we have been marching and counter-marching, entraining and debarking, living in a delirium. I have had no news from home in ages. Heaven only knows where my mail has gone. I can only scribble down a note here and there and wait for a moment that never comes. The war has seen nothing to match this hideous driving tempest of massed artillery. I have ceased to think or to wonder what is in store for me. The imagination, like the body, yields to fatigue and ceases to respond.

We have come back from beyond the English lines to a position of support at X——. The second thrust has rolled through us as it did through the English. Can it be stopped? I begin to lose faith. The sight of this army of refugees streaming through us is heart-breaking. Poor souls, now twice dispossessed from their homes! We have lost in these days all that we fought to recover. No wonder that bitterness has entered our souls: only De Saint Omer remains unfaltering in his faith, cheerful and inspired. But it is not so with the others.

To-morrow I shall have letters from home. An orderly is returning from Paris, and he will stop at the bank for my mail. Thank heaven! Even if it is denied me ever to see home again, it is like a ray of light at the end of

winter to know that there is somewhere a calm green world, where Bernoline, Molly and Anne exist.

We go forward in relief to-morrow at daybreak. The tension is terrible.

II

Taunton, February

Dear David:

A terrible thing has happened. My head is in a whirl — oh, my poor lovely Mademoiselle Duvernoy! How shall I tell you? I'm afraid I'm so upset by it all that I shan't be able to write you anything coherently. I still can't understand. It all happened so suddenly to-night, only a few hours ago.

We had a member of the visiting French Commission in for dinner, — quite informally. Father telephoned at the last minute he was bringing him and I had forgotten to mention it (Mademoiselle Duvernoy has always been unwilling to come down when guests were present). I was in the salon, alone with General de Villers-Costa — that is his name and a very distinguished and handsome officer he is — when Mademoiselle Duvernoy came abruptly in, humming to herself. We were so placed that she did not see the General until she was almost on him, and then, —I thought she was going to fall. As for him, he looked as though he had seen a ghost!

David, they recognized each other! I heard them cry,

"Bernoline — Mademoiselle de Saint Omer — vous ici!"

"Jacques — pour l'amour de Dieu, pas un mot!"

Then they stood together for a moment, talking very low and rapidly, and, at the end, Mademoiselle Duvernoy went by me without seeing me and up to her room, and General de Villers-Costa stood at the window a long while, while I waited, feeling as though the sky had fallen on me. When

he turned he came directly towards me, his eyes very red, in a terrible state of excitement, and said:

"Mademoiselle Brinsmade, as you are a true and loyal woman, I beg you to forget what you have seen and heard."

I nodded. I couldn't say a word and I think tears were in my eyes.

"Mademoiselle" (in his nervousness he kept pulling at his handkerchief), "did you hear the name I pronounced?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

This seemed to overwhelm him completely, for it was a long moment before he could continue.

"Mademoiselle — will you believe me that it is all a mistake — an astounding mistake — and will you, in charity — I ask of you — forget it?"

"I love Mademoiselle Duvernoy," I said. "I never could do anything to hurt her."

At that moment the others came in. I hurried upstairs, but she was not in her room. I ran out in the garden, and, at the end of the walk, I found her sitting, and oh, David, — the look on her face! I flung my arms about her and wept as though my heart would break and, for the first time, tears came to her too, and we clung to each other. She has told me nothing, though I know she loves me dearly, but just goes about staring in a numbed sort of way. David, what does it mean? What awful tragedy is in her life, — in the life of that dear little saint! David, I looked up her name in the Almanach de Gotha, and there is only one family of that name, the Duc Henri Plessis de Saint Omer: four sons, and — Bernoline Marie Renée Plessis de Saint Omer! Is it possible that —

* * * *

David, just as I was writing, she came into my room, and oh, David, she has told me all. There have been times when I suspected but I am overwhelmed. I must try to set it down as it happened, for she wishes me to write to you.

I was so buried in my letter that I had not heard her entrance until I felt her hand on my shoulder and looked up

to see her at my side. My face, I know, went red, and involuntarily I tried to cover up my letter.

"You have written it to David!" she said, looking into my eyes.

And then I guessed! All that I have merely wondered at — put out of my mind as impossible, as fantastic, flashed back. I knew, and she knew that I knew, for she said swiftly:

"He is the man that I have loved as I have never loved any one in my life."

I write it to you, as she said it, as you have the right to know.

"And whom I shall never see again," she added. "It is better that you should write it, dear child."

I flung myself in her arms and begged her forgiveness, not knowing what I did. I won't tell you all she said, David, only that I know now how you love her, for who could help loving her.

Later

The terrible, terrible thing is that she is going away. I have pleaded with her to stay as my friend: think what it must have been to her pride all these months — but nothing can move her. There is something mysterious under it all, something dreadful — I don't dare ask — that I feel no one has a right to know.

That night, she came down to dinner. I was so broken up when I saw her enter that I couldn't look at her, and the General stopped short and then began to talk rapidly. She came to me presently, and, in the same quiet tone, said:

"Anne, dear, I count on your help to-night. Be calm, dear, and after dinner, — I must speak to General de Villers-Costa."

Her control was absolute, yet I wonder that every one did not see the change, for it was no longer Mademoiselle Duvernoy who was in the room, but Bernoline, daughter of the Duke de St. Omer. Beyond that there was not a trace of emotion in face or manner. She must have a will of iron!

Dinner over, I managed to signal the General, and the three of us went into the garden together until we were well hidden from the house.

"And now, Anne, dear, thank you, and may I ask you to wait for us here just a moment. Monsieur de Villers-Costa, will you walk with me a little ahead?"

It must have been at least ten minutes before they returned, and the General was so evidently upset that he could not say a word as we came back. At the terrace Mademoiselle de Saint Omer turned and said, with the gracious smile which is hers alone,

"In this sad day I am fortunate in having two such loyal friends in whom I have perfect trust."

Wasn't that fine of her: not a question of our promising, — just trust! Then she went into the house, but as I started to follow her, the General stopped me.

"Mademoiselle — I beg of you — just a moment. I haven't that strength — a moment to get hold of myself."

"I, too," I said hastily, and we went and leaned over the balustrade, without a word.

"Thank you," he said, at last, drawing himself up. "I can go in, now." And he added, with a little touch of pride I loved, "Such are our women, Mademoiselle, — do you wonder that we fight on?"

She left to-day. Every one is terribly broken up, — even the servants, who, I think, instinctively felt her quality. She is returning to the convent in New York, but I think her intention is to sail for France. I feel so helpless, and so alone.

I could not write you last night and had to put my pen down. I don't know when I have been so completely broken up. It seems all so hideously unjust. She told me that she had written you, for the last time, but I cannot believe that. Surely, there must be some way out; life can't be so cruel as that. David, my dear friend, will you believe me that I have thought of you all these days and that my heart goes out to you?

The shock must have been terrible to her, for everything about her seemed absolutely petrified and her eyes looked at you with such a dry, such a burning heat. She never seemed to know she was talking to us or to be aware of what was around her. Her whole mind is concentrated on some fixed resolve. That is the terrible part, — with all my love, I cannot help her!

I shall not forget her last words when I caught her hands and implored her a last time not to go.

"I have failed: and this is my punishment."

Whatever can she mean, David, and what is it she is planning to do?

New York

Just a last line. I am sailing next week for France. I have enlisted for the war in the Red Cross as a hospital assistant. Father has arranged all for me, like the dear that he is, — without a single objection. And what do you think: I have seen Mademoiselle Duvernoy, and we are going over on the same boat! I know that this will be some comfort to you, for, David, I, too, love her, and I know she loves me, and is glad that I am to be with her. My address in Paris is below: it is quicker, they tell me, than the Red Cross. If you are in Paris before I go to my post, do come to me, David.

ANNE.

St. Rosa's Convent,
New York

David:

I am here with the good sisters. In a week I sail for France. This must be my last letter to you, and I shrink from the pain that it must bring you. Anne has written you what happened at Taunton. She knows only who I am, and my cousin, General de Villers-Costa, whatever he may suspect, knows no more. He is of my blood, and he is an absolutely loyal gentleman. His lips are sealed. To you alone I must tell everything. Better for us both if I had done so in the beginning. I couldn't. You will understand why.

David, I have told only two deliberate lies in my life, and each has been followed by a dreadful calamity: the first to save the life of a soldier of France; and the second to you, when you asked me if I were married. I did it because I thought I was doing it for your sake, because I was tried beyond my strength, because I no longer knew what to do, and because, David, I couldn't bear to leave in your heart a memory that would haunt you. I tell you now because it is inevitable.

David, I have failed, and God has seen fit to punish me. For months I have been tortured by remorse, for months I have refused to bear the full burden of my cross, and no one will ever know — not even you — the agony of my indecision. Now, my way is clear. I know what I must do, and I shall do it.

David, it is so hard to tell you, for as you know now, I am of an old and proud race, that guards its honor with its life; and, David, I am a woman who loves you. Forgive me, if you can, in my weakness. My family thinks me dead. For their sake, for the honor of my family, of my brother, whom you know now is at your side, I am and must remain dead. When I tried to escape from my destiny it was for their sake and their sake alone. Only one other person in this world besides you knows the truth, and that is Marianne, my old nurse, whom you saw at Bordeaux, and who has in her keeping my baby.

I cannot tell you in detail; that would be too horrible, and all the courage that I have built up would not be proof against that hideous memory.

You know that my mother and I were caught in the first German rush through Luxemburg. Our château was but a few kilometers from the border. It was taken and retaken, again and again. We stayed, as a duty to our peasants, to our old men and to our poor women and children. We believed in our pride that the authority of our name and presence could save them from torture and worse than torture. How little we knew the beasts with whom we were dealing! We thought we were safe, for the German commander was an

acquaintance of my brothers, — had visited us in our home in the years before the war! For we knew many Germans and we trusted in the honor of a gentleman of noble descent!

David, it is so hard to write it down. I can only do it by moments. Twice we were accused of signaling to the French, — twice imprisoned and threatened with execution, — we who gave our days and nights to but one thought, — the comforting of the dying, friend and enemy. We saw our home battered to pieces, everything we loved destroyed, everything we owned in the world wiped out, and yet, despite every agony, we stayed on, trusting in our sacred mission, to protect and aid those we loved.

And then came the lie. He was a little *poilu*, hardly more than a boy, who had been left behind, too wounded to carry away. We hid him in our own apartment, my mother and I, and to do it we lied. God forgive me, I would do it again! For discovery meant death: he was an Alsatian and for them the Boches know no pity. For three long weeks we were able to conceal his presence, — until he was able to make a try at escape. They caught him and all was discovered. And then —

They tore my mother from me and sent her off somewhere into the interior, to work in the fields. She was spared the worst, — the knowledge of what happened to me. She died. And to me came worse than death, — but oh, the ferocity of it, the brutality of it, the stamping of a weak woman with the rage of the victor; and he who did it was the one, above all, who by every tradition of chivalry, by every instinct of race, religion and honor —

David, my religion, my faith was all that was left me. What was I to do? To take one's life is to us a mortal sin; even that escape was denied me. And the horror when I knew that my shame was eternally fastened upon me! For the first months I sought death as only I had the right to seek it, praying for the mercy of a quick end, exposing myself in every bombardment, seeking every post of danger. Men were killed at my side — a child that ran to me was blown to pieces — and I lived.

Then, for the sixth time, our little village was retaken, and I escaped that night into France. A faithful soul gave out the report that I had been killed, and so, thank God, for the honor of my name, I am dead to-day.

The rest? I found my old nurse, Marianne, who concealed my identity and placed the baby (I have never been able to call it mine) with her family. I rebelled against it — God forgive me for that sin, as He in His high righteousness has seen fit to punish me. David, what those months were only a woman can know.

I had not meant to write you like this: but I cannot write it calmly. I have never rebelled against God, — only sometimes, I have not been able to understand. I have tried to think of His stern and equal justice. I have tried to think of all the other women, — yes, of those who have suffered more hideously than I. There was a girl — a child — but no, I cannot even write it. I try to say to myself that it is right that we too, the proud women of France, should suffer with the humblest.

David, where I was wrong was in trying to escape from what was in the will of God. It was my baby, and I forsook it. Night and day, that remorse, that conflict has been in my heart. And now, that through His justice, God has opened my eyes, I know my duty. I am going back to him, — my baby. I shall disappear from the world. No one shall ever know from now on what has become of me. But, since this is my cross, and since life in this world is not for me, I shall take up that cross, and, little by little, I shall learn no longer to rebel. The Holy Virgin, Mother of Sorrows, will watch over me and give me that courage. The child of hate is still an immortal soul and I, its mother, must save it for eternity.

David, I had thought that to write all this to you would break me. It has not. I feel as though something had purified my spirit, and I feel all at once a clarity of vision, a courage that is calm and will not falter. The truth, *mon ami,* cannot weaken us. It is only when we refuse to face it that we are weak. I feel this so strongly. Share this know-

edge with me, and do not suffer for me. I am no longer of this world.

David, it is only of you I think now. Now that the moment has come to say farewell, I can tell you all the love that is in my heart for you, has always been, will always be. David, how little you guessed what was in my heart, for I think I loved you from the first moment our eyes met, — when I saw in yours that look of sympathy — there on the dock. When you came to me that night on the deck, out of the night, and stood by my side, I knew that if I did not fight against it with all my will, I should love you and bring sorrow into your life. And how I fought against you! But in the moment when I felt the strongest I would see a look in your eyes, a wounded, uncomprehending look, and all my strength would go. At times it was all I could do to keep back the tears from my eyes! If only I had not seen all the need of a woman's love in your life!

And then, one night, after long sleepless hours, I had such a strange dream. I dreamed that I was on a rock in the midst of a great sea that rose and swirled about me, and, all at once I looked down and saw your face in the waters, and you were struggling towards me. I ran down to the edge and stretched out my hands and caught you and drew you up to safety, all wet and limp in my arms. And, ever since, this has haunted me, and at times I have seen in it a sign of your struggling to find your true self and that I, in some mysterious way, was meant to give you strength. I was so torn by differing impulses. I passed such long hours in my little berth, praying to the dear Virgin to help me to struggle, to be strong for your sake. But the moment I came into your presence, the moment I met your eyes, *mon ami*, I was just a woman, a weak, helpless woman, whose whole being went to you in the longing to love and be loved.

David, may God forgive me if I have done wrong by you; forgive me, too, — for I have loved you with every thought and every impulse of my life, with an intensity beyond my strength. I love you as only those can love, who have known the depths of sorrow and suffering; as those who need love in

their lives. If it had only been possible, what happiness I could have given thee, David, to you, who were so gentle and so strong! I know I haven't the right to say this, but I must! Just for these minutes, I am what I was born to be. Don't utterly forget me, David, — or rather, yes, utterly forget me, for your sake. I do not know any longer what I am saying, and to end is the end of all. Forget me. It is right and your duty. You must, for your sake, for my sake: but, afterwards, long years afterwards, — when you can do so calmly, remember that somewhere in this world, just as the dusk comes in over the world, — I shall be kneeling and praying for your happiness. B.

III

I HAVE been in a stupor for hours, my mind paralyzed, my brain unable to comprehend. Instead of rereading the letter eagerly, I put it mechanically back in its envelope and wrapped it up in the little rubber-lined case I carry along with me. I do not know that I shall ever be able to bring myself to read it again. It is too hideous — too incomprehensible. Good God! Such things do not happen! But why? Why? No, I cannot realize it!

For fifty-eight hours I have not lain down or closed my eyes. Ordinarily, after a second night of watchfulness, my physical nature revolts and I tumble over unconsciously. But now, at this moment, I am as keenly awake as though sleep were unknown to my brain. Inside my head, there is a feeling of a great, shining, hollow vacancy, and my little thoughts seem to rattle around in its luminous space, quite lost. I have done the strangest things, with a perfectly calm exterior. This morning I came upon a group of *poilus*, kneeling before a priest, Pere Glorieux, a *poilu* likewise, a black robe hastily

drawn over his soiled uniform, — giving the Communion with a solemn majesty that I shall ever remember. I went and knelt among them, gazing up at the rough bearded face with eyes that shone down into my soul, quite unconscious of anything further than the instinct within me. When he came to me, he hesitated.

"Vous êtes catholique, mon fils?"

I drew up, hastily.

"Non, non, je ne suis pas catholique. Pardon."

He bowed, hardly noticing the strangeness of my actions in the tumult about us, and I moved away, without realization either, — I was thinking of Bernoline.

That afternoon I slept for the first time. One moment I had been moving around, giving orders for the storing of our kit, and the next — I must have dropped suddenly like a drunken man, for when I came to, it was late afternoon, and my orderly told me I had slept fourteen hours without moving. I remember nothing of the last four days, except, — except that letter. Yet I have been, to all intents and purposes, a rational man, moving and speaking instinctively, meeting and answering my fellow officers, — and all is a blur. I remember no more than a swimming sensation of being buffeted in contending floods of humanity; of hearing motor lorries roaring endlessly in my ears; of being thundered over, shrieked over; of being borne along on the flotsam and jetsam of human tides, with dimly remembered half-lights; of a child's running to a dressing station, holding a broken jaw together; of a dog to whom I fed a crust; of an old woman, with red stockings, riding on an army kitchen, and I think I must have broken into a laugh!

Still we are in the back wash of refugees, old men, women, cattle, wounded *poilus* straggling to the rear, torn

regiments returning. They pass us like apparitions, eyes set and sullen. Only occasionally a cry from the ranks, a cry of old age or defiant youth, but the rest, the muddied human flood, rolls by, grim and inert. Fatalism! In our ranks a great deal of grumbling, but we know what that grumbling is worth. The aspect of the fields is hideous. The only thing which rouses our resentment is the passing to and fro of Boche aeroplanes and the sudden spurts of flame beneath them as they pass. We hate them, with a blind, unreasoning hatred, as the tiger must hate the weapon that slays it from a safe distance. For the rest, indifference.

The attack seems stemmed. We are in the second line, ready to relieve the ——th Division when our turn comes. Our aeroplanes have swarmed in, and everywhere there are strange falcon-like encounters, under the clouds and above them. To-day, as I was seeking General La Pierre's headquarters, Maurice de Saint Omer hailed me around a jutting wall.

"Eh, l'Americain! David, *mon bon vieux!* Still alive?"

I shrank from him; why, I don't know. But the touch of his hand hurt me.

"Mais, qu'est-ce que tu as, mon vieux. Tu es blessé?"

"No — sleep!"

"Turn in here. We have a cellar as luxurious as the Ritz. Lunched?"

"Sufficiently." I could not look at him. It seemed a dream, to be letting him chatter on so nonchalantly, with the letter that lay in my pocket. "Only just located you. How's every one?"

"Not so bad," he said, looking around. "Pretty warm at times. D'Arvilliers, poor fellow, blown to pieces — a few flesh wounds. We counter-attacked the day before

yesterday. Hot work. Took a number of prisoners. The Boches are fagged out. Nothing to eat for days."

"Have we stopped them?"

"Absolutely. Enormous losses. This time they're done for!"

Others grumble and look serious; with him, not an instant's wavering. Victory is his faith. There I recognize the race of Bernoline.

Bernoline! For all these days I have rejected her from my mind, by some involuntary instinct of self-preservation. I think at times during that blank moment it must have been touch and go with me. Where was my mind all the while? Who knows? That I am still able to reason sanely may be due to this hideous obsession of panic and retreat which has mercifully crowded in on my struggling consciousness. Still I cannot realize it!

I have just taken out the two letters and examined the postmarks. They were mailed five weeks ago. She has been in France, then, for weeks!

IV

AND, in this moment of all moments, a letter from Letty. Others I had taken and torn to shreds. When this came, I laughed out loud and opened it.

David mio:

You love me: you have always loved me, or you could not have hated me so. It is in your blood. I loved you and I love you, or I could never have done the thing I did. *Que voulez vous?* We are made as we are made. Why struggle, and what is your victory worth?

Come back to me. You will find me changed in all but one thing. Yes, I am a little pagan: I am good and bad: I am capricious, changing, cruel, but I love you! *Tu te souviens?* What is all the rest worth? *Viens, pour un jour or pour toujours! A ton plaisir, mon roi!*

You will not believe me? I sign my name in full.

LETTY DE TINQUERVILLE LITTLEDALE.

A woman who dares to do that *must* love you!

LETTY.

We struggle on and we say to ourselves that we can struggle just so far. Yet we go on struggling until there comes a moment of utter defeat, a moment of terrible weakness, of crushing moral fatigue, when the will cries out that too much has been asked of it and we are ready to throw over everything. Up to such a breaking point we can contend: that reached, everything crumbles and the rest is panic. I know. I have been there.

Thank God I was not in the Paris of Letty at that moment, when I was saying to myself, "Why be tormented by a conscience — why deny one's self for an ideal — when all it means is this dead loneliness, this blank ache of denial, this laying bare of a hundred nerves to daily pain!"

A sudden hatred swept over me against myself, a scorn and a bitter rebellion. Why couldn't I be like other men, who close up their hearts, cease dreaming, and avoid the price of great emotions? To take life in little measures, to play in the shallows and avoid the tempestuous depths: other men, most men, live in this tranquil, tolerant attitude; why not I? They may never know the exaltation of a moment but they will not bear the dead despair of years.

Yes, just for that moment — the bitterest in my life — everything in me rebelled against myself. I cursed myself: I ridiculed my compunctions and my sickly conscience, my oversensitive imagination, and my groping after futility. I hated everything I was and everything I had done that had brought me to this living bankruptcy. I broke into a laugh — a laugh of contempt and derision at myself — flung into my things and went riotously into the night, seeking some befuddling oblivion, — some sudden end of this martyrdom of discipline — and, after a quarter of an hour's blind wandering, I turned abruptly into an open chapel and down on my knees, there to remain inertly until the frenzy had spent itself! But — if it had been Paris — and Letty's shadowy eyes at my side —

This was two days ago. The storm has passed. Somehow, the struggle has been met anew. I take no credit. That moment of weakness was too real. A man who looks back honestly over his own life is terrified at the things that did not happen, — and not by the strength of his own will, but by the saving quality of circumstance or accident. Few women can understand this: every man will.

Action has cleared my brain — the necessity of going on — of doing some little, appointed thing. The tension is relaxing; the swaying, stumbling conflict has stabilized itself. Arras is saved and we have even counter-attacked the attackers and regained some ground! Many prisoners are coming in.

I have been out with a covering party cleaning up the dugouts and among other discoveries we have made prisoner a fierce-looking old fellow — quite a prize — a Gen-

eral von Holwitz. His left arm was pretty badly shot up. So I was delegated to take him to a dressing station and have it attended to. Brought him back to our post, as he looks pretty much played out, and coffee and a touch of brandy will pull him up amazingly. Even if he is a Boche, he is a gentleman and an officer.

De Saint Omer came in while I was feeding my prisoner, and recognized him as an old acquaintance of pre-war days. Curiously enough, Von Holwitz was visibly upset by the meeting and drew back into his Prussian shell. But that is the way with these war lords, — defeat is something they cannot bear, and I fancy that the humiliation of being made a prisoner is galling to him.

Our dugout is about six miles back of the front lines but as we are in a strategic village the crossroads are heavily bombarded. The cellars are full of refugees. De Saint Omer's attitude towards his prisoner is strictly courteous but the conversation is along conventional lines, naturally. To-night Von Holwitz sleeps with us; to-morrow he goes to the rear, while we, in all probability, are destined for a forward sector.

V

In Germany, February, 1919

TEN months have passed since I broke off, — ten months in which I have shrunk again and again from opening this chronicle to write down the final chapters. For months, only the constant affection of De Saint Omer, who has watched over me like a brother, and the loyalty of Anne have kept me sane and struggling to accept life as it has had to be readjusted and lived out. I have been

through battle after battle, buried twice under a torrent of shells, sought the thickest of the danger, and come through unscathed. The war is ended, the armistice has come, and ahead is the more difficult thing — life.

A month ago I tried to write and gave it up. This last week a new calm has come into my spirit, — a strange, sudden convalescence, like the lifting of a long fever. I shall suffer to write down the end, and yet I shall suffer more until it is done. It is only the record of a last few hours, six or seven in all, and yet it is the record of the ending of a lifetime and the beginning of another. To write it will not be difficult. Every word, every look is implanted in my memory, has haunted me in the delirium of the night and the walking unreality of the day, from the moment I came into the courtyard at R—— until the final parting, when I saw her with the baby in her arms.

She might have come, passed at my side and gone, without my ever knowing it if it had not been for her old nurse, Marianne. R—— was under a prolonged bombardment that morning. The Boches must have had wind of the passage of an artillery support, for they opened up on the crossroads in the public square at dark and kept at it venomously all night. Our casualties were heavy and, just before dawn, a squadron of Fokkers bombed us, adding to the inferno. We stuck close to our cellars all morning,—De Saint Omer, our Boche Von Holwitz, and myself, but towards noon, as the fire seemed to lessen somewhat, or rather to leave the streets of the village and concentrate on the Square, De Saint Omer decided to take his prisoner back to headquarters and have him sent to the rear. He went out with Von Holwitz who, to give the devil his due, showed good nerve, and I promised to follow presently.

I finished shaving and tidying up and started after them, but hardly had I poked my head out before the Boches began to search out the village with shrapnel, and I was driven to shelter. At the end of an hour I succeeded in making my way through the ruins of cellars to an area of comparative quiet. The streets were badly cut up and blocked. I crossed behind a pile of masonry, entered the wreck of the church, and gaining the shelter of a wall, passed into the garden of what had once been a convent. There I stopped amazed.

A child — hardly more than a baby — was seated in the gravel path, gravely picking up the pebbles and building them in heaps, and by his side an old peasant woman, on her knees, was sobbing and telling her beads.

The village had, I knew, its smatter of refugees, hidden away in cellars, awaiting an opportunity to escape, and the spot was somewhat out of the line of fire. But the sight of a child, sitting unconcernedly there, under the split skies where shells were screaming to and fro, while half a mile away the houses were crumbling and great holes being torn in the streets, filled me with horror.

I stepped forward, and said, peremptorily:

"Que diable faites vous ici, ma bonne vielle?"

She looked up at me, startled at my voice. I stared at her, sprang back, started forward and, placing my hand on her shoulder, peered at her. Over the passage of months, of a hundred shifting scenes, a memory came slowly back to me, a face seen in the wet dawn of a November morning, on the docks at Bordeaux.

"Marianne!"

Her jaw dropped and she started up, staring at me, — but no recognition came to her.

Marianne! Then the child was —

The next moment, I heard De Saint Omer's voice around the wall. A sudden flash of what had happened

came to me. I stumbled to the opening, turned the corner, and came upon them: De Saint Omer, Von Holwitz, planted in a corner, and before me, in the blue and white uniform of the Red Cross — Bernoline!

The next moment, oblivious of all the rest, I had her in my arms. She lay there, inert, weakly incapable of words, a poor, fluttering bird, listening to my voice that cried out to her. Gradually, her arms rose, passed around my neck, and tightened there.

"*Ah, mon Dieu,* even you!"

I realized nothing; neither the significance of her cry of despair, nor the grim erectness of the brother, nor the shadowy third, waiting with crossed arms against the wall. I only knew life had come again to me. I had her. I would never let her go. She had come to me again, again into my life! No matter what had been the past, no matter what her reasons, her pleadings or her will, — this time nothing could separate us again. I had come out of the inferno and the delirium back to life and hope.

"Bernoline, I have almost gone mad!"

She took my head in her hands and looked in my eyes.

"Ah *mon bien aimé* — if I could have spared you this! David, give me your strength for these last minutes!"

"What do you mean?"

I looked from her to the two men and back again. Still I did not seize the situation. Then, all at once, the tense rigidity of their attitudes struck me. I had the feeling of arriving on the skirts of tragedy, — of something having happened before, of my being out of it — an intruder, a mere spectator — while something ominous and terrifying was moving to its culmination. I felt that and instinctively I caught her in my arms again, to hold her against the unseen thing that threatened us. I tried to collect

my wits to piece together this mystery. If De Saint Omer were here — then he, too, knew. Bernoline had told him; with the child present no concealment was possible.

Then, I think for the first time, out of the blur, I became aware of the incongruity of Von Holwitz being there. I looked at him and saw the stone pallor on his face. Yet I did not understand.

"What is it? What are you all waiting for? Bernoline, why is that man here?"

Then I saw it in her face! Good God!

VI

WHEN I next remember anything, Bernoline's arms were around me, and I was staring at Von Holwitz, who was gasping for breath against the wall, a streak of blood curved on his cheek. De Saint Omer — he must have had arms of steel — had me by the collar, and I heard Bernoline crying,

"David, David, for my sake — don't!"

I turned and looked at her, — a look that must have frightened her, for I heard her say:

"*Ah, mon bien aimé,* will you desert me now?"

My brain cleared instantly. I put my hand over my eyes and pressed against the dull numbness that filled my head. When I looked up, De Saint Omer had loosened his hold and stood watching me.

"David, understand well one thing," he said sharply, to bring me to my senses. "As head of my family, I *command* here."

Even then nothing could have held me, — nothing but the touch of her hand.

"God! You can stand here and *reason!*"

"Come to your senses! At once!" he ripped out, with the suddenness of a drill master. "Do you hear me, *Lieutenant* Littledale! At once!"

It was incongruous, grotesque, and involuntary, but I came to attention and my hand went up in salute. Our eyes met, and what I saw there made me forget everything else.

"*Pardon, mon commandant.* I am at your orders."

Then I looked at Von Holwitz; if there was death brooding in the face of De Saint Omer, the face of the other was the face of the dead.

"David, you will do everything exactly as I decide," De Saint Omer said more quietly, though his eyes continued to blaze imperiously, dominating my own. "Monsieur, I am quite capable of protecting the honor of my sister and the name of my family."

"Do as he says, *mon ami,*" said Bernoline, staring past me. "He has the right."

"*Mon commandant,*" I repeated stiffly. "I shall obey."

From that moment everything seemed to occur outside of me. I was there, but only to look on helplessly and incredulously, — an American watching the unfolding of some grim scene in the Middle Ages, a spectator before an older race, disciplined, proud, exact to their point of honor, as their old grim generations had held to that honor.

I, who could understand but the instinct of murder — blinding, groping, two-handed murder — was dominated, morally and physically, by the cold, punctilious, relentless decision in the burning eyes of De Saint Omer that sent a chill into my heart as though I were back in the days of the Sforzas and Malatestas. What was he going to do? What were they waiting for?

The next moment I knew. The gravel cried out; a shadow fell between us, and a *poilu* stood at attention.

"*Mon commandant,* you sent for me?"

It was Père Glorieux, soldier of God and France, gun in hand, knapsack on his back.

"You have your surplice?"

"*Oui, mon commandant.*"

"Good. Just a moment." He turned to me, designating Von Holwitz with his thumb. "You have your revolver?"

"*Oui, mon commandant.*"

I drew it but I did not trust myself to meet the eyes of Von Holwitz, who was sitting and staunching his wound with a handkerchief.

"Save yourself the trouble," I heard him say. "I expect nothing!"

De Saint Omer, moving to one side, began to talk to Père Glorieux. Once or twice I saw the soldier start and glance in our direction, but immediately he controlled himself. Finally they returned.

"Mademoiselle, it is customary to confess," Père Glorieux began, to my growing amazement.

"*Mon père* — I did — this morning."

"I shall take communion, too," said De Saint Omer. "If you will hear me, first — "

The *poilu,* for he still was the soldier, passed on and confronted Von Holwitz.

"You are Catholic?"

"I am."

"Do you do this willingly?"

"More than willingly."

"For the good of your soul, my son, you will confess!"

"That is my desire."

He straightened up, solemn and abrupt, but the assumption of dignity was spoiled by the wound on his cheek which continued to flow and against which he kept continually pressing his handkerchief.

"Commandant de Saint Omer, I do not expect any mercy. I would not ask for it. That is understood. I ask you to trust to my honor. I shall not evade any decision you make."

"Your honor?"

"There *is* an honor at such times — among men of our kind," he said stubbornly.

Curiously enough, the phrase of Alan's flashed into my mind; every man, his code. Even Von Holwitz, brute and bully, wished to die like an officer. I think De Saint Omer saw that, for he nodded, and I pocketed my revolver.

"Follow me," he said peremptorily.

The three men moved across the garden, to a further niche in the wall. Père Glorieux, opening his knapsack, drew a surplice over his uniform and rose with a sudden majesty. De Saint Omer had fallen to his knees, while Von Holwitz waited, sitting some distance apart.

I had my arm around Bernoline, still supporting her broken strength, and at last I turned to her, screwing up courage to ask the question I feared.

"Bernoline!"

"Oui, mon ami?"

"What is it they're going to do? What is going to happen?"

She tried to tell me, but couldn't. Again I asked the question.

"You do not know?"

"For God's sake, what is it?"

"David — I — I — am to marry him!"

"Marry *him!*"

"It is for the honor of the family," she said, as a tired child repeats a formula. "Maurice has said it must be so. I have no choice."

"And afterward?"

She shivered and sagged against my shoulder. Again the world went black about me. To stand at her side and to witness that! Yet I knew I was powerless to oppose, and even in my misery I gave justice to his reason. The first part was clear, but — afterwards? The time seemed endless, as we waited there, clinging to each other, too numb with the sense of pain to utter word or protest.

"Lieutenant Littledale!"

I came sharply back to my senses.

"Follow us — take care of my sister — into the chapel — "

Père Glorieux first, then the two men, side by side, and back of them Bernoline and I; so we went, around the wall, where, I remember, Marianne's wrinkled face shone wet with tears. There a ghastly thing happened.

The child, startled by our apparition, started to run, stumbled, and lurched against the leg of Von Holwitz. Never shall I forget the look on his face as he looked down!

Bernoline sprang forward, an instinctive movement of motherhood — who knows, perhaps the first — and snatched him up. The child, frightened, began to cry. I took him hurriedly and put him in the arms of the nurse. Bernoline stood, waiting my return, and the tears were standing in her eyes as she looked back.

"God help me to feel as a mother," she said, staring beyond me. "David, your hand."

Together, we picked our way across the strewn débris to the chapel.

"Charlotte Corday! Charlotte Corday!" kept running through my mind. Why? I don't know. An irrelevant suggestion, unless it were the feeling of a martyr in the tumbrils of the Revolution, going to her execution. Yes, I think that was the thought.

I remember little of the mockery of a service. I stood in the shadows, unable to think or pray, hearing from time to time the shriek of a traveling shell, the mumbled, hurried cadences from the altar, and across the shattered walls, from time to time, in the quiet between explosions, the cry of the child; that child who, too, was a human being with an immortal soul, and must work out its destiny of wrath. Once, a stray shell burst several hundred yards away and a flying crumb of masonry fell in the nave and ricocheted a moment. No one moved. De Saint Omer stood like an avenging angel, arms folded, waiting.

It was over. She came to me directly, gave a little sigh, and lay shuddering in my arms.

"And now?"

It was the voice of Von Holwitz, facing his judge.

"Follow me."

"Murder?"

At this Bernoline started up and running to her brother, caught him by the arm.

"Maurice, qu'est-ce que tu vas faire?"

"Ne crains rien, ma petite soeur. Aie foi! La justice du bon Dieu se fera. General von Holwitz — are you ready?"

"I am curious to know your plan. Is it murder?"

"Monsieur, you forget that you are among Frenchmen," he said, looking down at him. "I have no further explanations to make to you. Père Glorieux, you will inform Mademoiselle de Saint Omer."

None of us noticed the slip until afterwards. Von Holwitz flushed under the rebuke, shrugged his shoulders, and then turned to Bernoline.

"I do not imagine that you contemplate claiming my name for my son."

He waited. No one answered him.

"If you should wish a written attestation, I shall be glad to give it. That was all I wanted to say. Père Glorieux,"— he drew out his pocketbook and handed it to the *poilu,* — "you will find here the address of my mother. The rest — for the necessary masses. Ready, now."

He turned and, with the spirit of bravado that remained to the end, his heels clicked and his hand came to salute.

"Ahead of me — and walk as I direct you," said de Saint Omer's stern voice. *"Bernoline, ma petite soeur, prie pour ton frère."*

The last I saw of Von Holwitz was the eternal red and white handkerchief pressed to his cheek, — a man who was going to his death, annoyed at a scratch! They passed and the voice of Père Glorieux cried out,

"Pray for the souls of both of them!"

What happened I have never been able to see quite clearly. They went down the main street, twenty paces between them, and straight to the murderous intersection at the Square. What was the idea in the mediaeval imagination of De Saint Omer; the judgment of God, as by some trial of fire; or, if that failed him, a resort to the duel? I don't know. Strange as it may seem, it is a question I have never asked. I couldn't. The past between us two is something buried and protected by the granite weight of suffering. At any rate, it ended there in the Square. Thank God for that!

We had been on our knees — I don't know how long — Bernoline and I, shoulder to shoulder, — praying from the bottom of our hearts when De Saint Omer returned. I saw him coming and leaned towards her.

"Safe!"

She closed her eyes, and her head dropped on my shoulder. The next moment, the brother was beside her, kneeling.

"Your prayers were heard, little saint. And God has done justice."

I left them alone and went outside and sat on a toppled stone. Heavens, how benign and innocent that afternoon was, clear blue with powdery clouds above, the young green stealing along a sheltered bush, the shrill piping of a nesting bird somewhere, — a note that pierced through the shattering iteration of the bombardment and down into my brain. It terrified me, that insistent eternal cry of reborn nature that recked neither our sorrows nor our human passing.

Père Glorieux came out presently, drew off his surplice, ranged his communion service, packed it into a box and opened his knapsack. I watched him. *Poilu* once more, gun at attention, he stood awaiting orders, a bronzed, bearded face that had looked into death and heard the laments of a thousand souls.

"David, mon frère!"

I rose, seeing nothing. De Saint Omer came to me and took my hand in his quick, vibrating grip.

"From now on, we are brothers. It is a solemn promise," he said, looking into my eyes. "And now, David, *mon frère,* there is only one person to be thought of, — Bernoline. You will give her the courage she needs. I know her decision. It is the only one. We are an old race, and, when we see our duty, we never hesitate. Come to me afterwards." He opened his arms and took me into them in a long embrace. Then he turned to his sister.

"It is good-by until —" He raised his finger to the calm serenity above. "Sister, your blessing."

He dropped to one knee. She laid her hands on his forehead and her lips moved silently. Then he rose and went hurriedly out. The *poilu* turned and went to join Marianne and the child. I was alone with Bernoline.

"Good God! If a shell would only end it all!"

"*Mon ami,* that is why death is not the hardest."

I held out my arms. She came to them, her eyes looked into mine, our lips came together, and that first kiss, which was our last, was given with our mingled tears.

I did not attempt to struggle against our fate. I knew it was hopeless. She did not move; nor did her arms relax their straining tension while time went by us unheeded, until —

"I love you, David *mon adoré.* I have always loved you, with all my being," she said, looking into my eyes.

"Bernoline, I would marry you now, to-day. I could go with you anywhere, into any life — you and your child — nothing can matter," I said brokenly.

"I know." She tried to smile and couldn't. "Thank you, dear, for not making it harder. And now come."

She held out her hand and, taking it, I followed her blindly.

All that I remember is my standing there in the swept garden of the convent, is seeing her take the child from the nurse and raise it to her shoulder. Thus bearing her cross, she went out of my life forever.

All the rest is only numbed pain and incomprehension, — weeks and months. To-day I am alive, and the world has somehow come back to me. How, I don't know.

Now that I have written it down, I feel as though something had changed in me. Our sorrows destroy us, or

themselves. Somewhere before, I remember writing that. Something is gone in me that the rest may struggle up and go on.

VII

THERE is little more to add, only two letters, — one from Bernoline and one from Anne, without whom I would not be here to-day. They came to me, worn and postmarked, a week before we went into the final struggles of July, and through those final months of hurricane and tireless slaughter I carried them over my heart — together.

David:

I write this last letter to you. Would that I had never crossed your path, to bring the unhappiness that I have brought into your life. I write this to you as the final and supreme proof of my love, of all that I would have given you every hour of the year, had God willed it. It is of Anne that I write.

I went to her at B——, where she is stationed, and told her all, though much she had guessed. David, she is no longer the girl, untried and undisciplined. She is a woman that you will be proud of as your wife, when the time comes, and the ache and pain have passed. There is a bigness in her soul, something deep and honest — and she loves you. She has always loved you and, what is wonderful in a woman's heart — she understands. There will never be anything petty or unworthy of a great nature. She loves you, David; how much, how beautifully; with what a maternal affection you can never guess. And you need this protecting love. If you could have been present, have seen the look in her eyes, her simplicity and her dignity, when I asked her to be your strength, to watch over you these months!

"I love him," she said. "I have never really loved any one else, and I took a vow long ago that if I could not belong to him, I would never marry any other man."

Perhaps I have no right to tell you this, but in this moment I think you should know. Do not turn from her, David. It is a treasure that awaits you.

I have thought of you ever since I left you; I think of you every moment of my hours in the little chapel that alone brings me some strength, and I have seen far ahead of the pain of the present. I would that I could take into my heart all that I cannot keep you from suffering, that you must suffer for a while for having come into my sad life. Yes, David, it will be hard — readjustment is hard — it is sometimes so much easier to go on, no matter what we have to bear. But you will come out of this period of trial. You will come out superbly. Happiness will be waiting for you; do not delay too long. For, dear friend, you are one of those who need happiness in your life. All this period of unrest and indecision which so often has depressed you and shaken your confidence will give you a bigger vision and a surer charity, when once life is stable and calm. And, David, that will come; I know it — I feel it so strangely. I do see ahead, and I think this power is given me as some consolation for what I must bear.

Don't let your mind dwell too much on me. I have my faith, David, and I can accept anything. Sacrifice must fall on all equally in this terrible trial. I am only one of a million women, — remember that!

And now, it must be good-bye — *Ah, mon bien aimé,* how hard it is to write. I feel as though thy hand were in my hand and that I were clinging to it, unable to let it go. I do not ask thee to forget me. Remember me only to help thee. Be strong — be true to yourself — accept life nobly. Your country is a great country; men like you are needed. Be what you can, whether it be big or little, to give it leadership. Suffering we cannot avoid, *mon ami,* but unselfish achievement is alone lasting satisfaction. Davy, *mon bien aimé,* aim high, for your own sake — and for the peace of soul of one who night and day will keep you both in her prayers.

BERNOLINE.

David:

Bernoline has been here, and told me, and oh, my heart goes out to you. You will need to know that you are not alone in this world, that there is some one who shares your sorrow and holds you dear. Will you let me be all that to you — just for the present. Will you let me give you just a little of the great love that you are denied, and let me tell you that in friendship or otherwise, as it may come to you, I am always at your side. I don't know how I find the courage to write you thus. I know you will respect it. We are not children, dear. We are man and woman, and we both know suffering. If I thought only of myself, I would never send this letter. But we live in the midst of death, when little things fade away, and at the thought of your utter loneliness, David, dear, I think of nothing else but the love you need, and I can do no less after having known Bernoline.

David, she is not of this world. I shall always love her as you love her, as a peasant kneels and adores an ideal among the shadows and the candles. She has a strength that is not my strength, a faith that I envy but cannot find. I went with her to the little chapel of St. Anne, and knelt while she prayed. If you could have seen her face! I thought it was not the sculptured calm of the Madonna enshrined in heaven but the serenity in her worn eyes that was the miracle. A little saint, David, has crossed our paths and we must be true to the memory. Let me help you, David, dear.

ANNE.

VIII

A WEEK has gone since I started these final pages. I have been amazed at the feeling of detachment that has come to me. Bernoline and Maurice have often spoken to me of that state of grace which in their faith lifts men

and women above the earth to seek heaven. I have seen this same unhuman state of grace, of sanctified sacrifice, among officers and *poilus* during the war, — the need to live in some rarefied atmosphere. Family and friends recede before the proud isolation of the soul dedicated to a sacrificial death. It is not quite that with me. Yet there has come with the final writing a serenity that surprises me. Is it that I have suffered beyond my capacity — for each of us has in him only a certain capacity to suffer — or is it life in its strange compensations that is molding me? To-day, for the first time, I can recall Bernoline and feel a quiet happiness to have been privileged to know her. Until now I have felt only my bondage to the past. To-day — *noblesse oblige* — I want to live, and count in the living. The bitterness and the rebellion are gone; an inspiration remains.

In this new liberation, Anne, too, counts for much. I have seen her three times, — once in a week's *permission* we were together every day. Twice a week her letters come to me. It is strange how Bernoline has brought us together. We both feel it. There is a great moral force in love, and against its silent, cumulative movement the meanness and littleness of life must yield. As Bernoline, in her faith, wished to see us, we shall become.

There is beyond the inherent nobility that is in Anne a largeness of spirit that is hard for a man to understand. She reveres the memory of Bernoline and in her great heart there is no trace of jealousy. At least, if there is, it is wonderful how she conceals it. That is a quality which I do not think would be in me. I can look ahead — we both can — and see what is coming; yet until every corner of my heart is wholly and loyally hers, I cannot offer it to her. To do so would be to offend what is the

one thing to build on, — absolute honesty between us, that brings the deepest reverence. — Yet, to-day, I know the time is near.

We both feel the call to service and often have discussed where we may fit in to do our little part. For a life that is closed in about our own self-centered enjoyment is now impossible. We see the failure of our generation, — its failure to rise to its opportunities and responsibilities, its consequent weakening and approaching impotence and the inevitable surging up from beneath of another more virile force; the substitution of a natural for an artificial power (as Alan would have said). It *is* a challenge.

Once, when we were discussing this, Anne said to me a very searching thing.

"David, our kind hasn't even the instinct of self-preservation."

True — but if we haven't we shall have to yield, as we should yield.

Anne constantly surprises me. I find in her such an eager outlook on life, — a longing to read, to explore, to question, to find an illuminating purpose for living. Her mind, as it awakens, leads mine on, and I react to its stimulus.

I have no illusion about myself. The part I may be called on to play is but a little part in the progress of my country. Yet, there must be thousands of us — quiet, patient lieutenants — to make possible the coming of a real leader.

I think I understand better now the mystery of good and evil, the thought that has run all through these pages, — often groping, turned back on itself, and often in seem-

ing contradiction. Sometimes out of evil there comes a healthy reaction, but the moral quality of an act remains, much as we should like to believe otherwise. Temptations, the great salient temptations that determine a life, are as rare as opportunities. They are opportunities to be met and dominated. Neither Letty nor any of her kind can to-day even for a moment swerve me from my clear perception of values. That, at least, I know. Yet, in my memory that will always be a tithe to be paid. I have won a certain mastery, — but a scar will abide.

The mystery of good and the pain that from a pure source may often destroy a life is this. In each of us is the choice between rebellion and acceptance of life; in each is the reaching out beyond our designated paths, towards a love that has the romance, the mystery and the wonder of life, that we know is forbidden us. Even so in the Garden of Eden, the fruit of the tree of knowledge was forbidden. The other is facing actuality, founding our lives on a logical, practical companionship, and growing into unity through mutual respect and the test of experience. To different natures, different answers. Rebel against life and destroy ourselves with a beating of the wings against the bars of circumstance, — or meet it with a deliberate, difficult acceptance? Which, I wonder, is the more fortunate nature? But for those who have a tiny, latent spark hidden away under layers of bread-and-butter years — an uneasy stirring of remembered dreams — youth, too often, must be burned out, like a fever.

THE END

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